University of Alberta

Ecotourism Development in Northern Thailand: An exploration of perceptions and potentials

by

Ian R. Sheldon ©

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of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science

in

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN NORTHERN THAILAND: AN EXPLORATION OF PERCEPTIONS AND POTENTIALS submitted by Ian Richard Sheldon in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Protected Areas and Wildlands Management.

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Abstract

The Tourism Authority of Thailand is interested in promoting the natural regions of Northern Thailand for recreation purposes. Many protected areas are already environmentally compromised as a result of development and population growth. Ecotourism is seen as one possible management option to alleviate such problems. Understanding visitors' needs and desires helps direct appropriate recreation management. This study explores perceptions relating to the benefits and costs of ecotourism, existing management practices, and visitors' interests and motives. Regional ecotourism opportunities are also considered.

Results suggest that: optimism for the goals of ecotourism is high if the industry's ethics are strictly followed; services and facilities need improvement to increase visitor satisfaction; a diversity of interests in wildlife exists beyond the traditional big game; and that the region boasts an outstanding range of potential ecotourism attractions. Doi Inthanon National Park, in light of the heavy tourism focus on the park, is examined as a case study.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Dr. Jim Butler for his enthusiasm, guidance and support throughout the duration of my degree and beyond. He has been a major influence and teacher in many respects, and it is under his umbrella that I have developed both professionally and personally. My thanks also go to my committee members Dr. Guy Swinnerton and Dr. Dhara Gill. Both have been very helpful in the early and late stages of the development of this thesis. In addition, Dr. Gill's involvement as Director of the CIDA funded Institutional Linkage project between the University of Alberta and Maejo University helped make this study a success. He accepted the original proposals and ensured that the funding would follow to make this project possible. I benefited from working with Chris Fisher, since it gave me an opportunity to share a valuable experience, and I would like to thank him for all his help and support.

In Thailand I would like extend my thanks to the very many people that helped me. Unfortunately I cannot name every single one. I would however like to mention by name and thank the following. Dr Songvut Phetpradap helped ensure that my stay was well coordinated, comfortable and enjoyable. Dr. Numchai Thanupon helped with the research and the extensive list of useful contacts within the protected areas of the region. Without Diana Jantakad this thesis and the results of my stay in Thailand would be nowhere near what they are. She was so very important to me from the moment of welcome to departure, and I cannot express my gratitude sufficiently. Many more staff at Maejo University deserve mention, but I hope they will receive my gratitude without mention of their name specifically. The students of Maejo University enhanced the quality of my research and my experience in Thailand. In particular I would like to thank Narupon Lerdkanjanaporn and Danai Winairat for their devoted assistance in interpreting and translating. Not only were they of great significance for their help in the field, but they were also great friends who exposed me to and taught me about life and the culture in Thailand. I am deeply indebted to them both. The rest of the ecotourism class was also of great support, help and inspiration as friends and volunteers in my research. I would like to thank them all for their part. The MAFA class at Maejo University also deserve my many thanks since it was through their direct help and contacts that I was able to visit so many protected areas in Northern Thailand.

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I would like to thank all those workers and tourists who contributed their valuable time to allow me to conduct my research, and I am very appreciative that they could help me rather than go about their normal duties or enjoy their vacation. Much insight was also provided by many academic staff in the country and I am grateful for their input.

I would like to thank the country of Thailand for welcoming me and giving me such a beautiful natural, cultural and spiritual experience. Both the wildlife, wildlands and people are equally beautiful, and I hope this work will eventually benefit them all in years to come.

Lastly my parents deserve mention. It was through them that I learned to appreciate and embrace the diversity and beauty of life. The exposure to many countries, cultures and wild places may be the root of my desire to conserve all that should be cherished in the world. I thank them for their support, both direct and indirect.

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List of abbreviations

CM – Chiang Mai
CMP - Chiang Mai Province
CRP - Chiang Rai Province
DINP - Doi Inthanon National Park
LAC – Limits of Acceptable Change
LG - Lampang
MHS - Mae Hong Son
MHSP - Mae Hong Son Province
NP - National Park
P – Phrae
TAT - Tourism Authority of Thailand
VIM - Visitor Impact Management

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 A personal note: conservation and Thailand

A passion and understanding for the environment and all things living within it means that I am deeply concerned with issues regarding their conservation. While the pressures on our remaining natural areas grow every day, it is through the promotion of these areas as a tourism attraction that I believe will be the salvation of many threatened places. In Canada we are blessed with unrivalled space and large protected areas, yet we probably take much of this for granted. If we look at the fate of a country like Thailand, a new realization and meaning for protection of natural areas becomes apparent.

Thailand is a relatively small country (approximately 500,000 km^2) with a relatively high population density (115/km^2). In its status as a newly industrialized nation, the pressures through development and population growth are enormous. The demands on its remaining natural resources are huge, and come most notably from the poorer sections of society that often live in closer contact with the natural world. While the government has recognized the need to conserve areas (in the form of national parks and other designations) it often overlooks the one most important factor that will threaten the integrity of the ecosystems – the local people. A protected area, without looking out for the needs of the locals, may be under considerable threat.

It is my belief that successful conservation comes through working with the local people, to help them to recognize the value of natural systems and wildlife. The most successful way of doing this is likely less through education and information about the negative effects of deforestation (though there is considerable value in education concurrently), but in creating a commodity out of nature. While the idea of rendering nature a commodity can be problematic or even undesirable, with the control and participation of local people the results can be very favourable. If a forest is about to face destruction and there remains only the other option of ecotourism, then the commodification of nature is nature's salvation. As a saving grace for natural areas, development of ecotourism can be a solution, and through this method, watersheds and biodiversity remain relatively intact.

Northern Thailand (see Figure 2.1) boasts a diversity of beautiful parks and other natural regions. Pressures on these are intense, and so when I had the opportunity to research the potentials in this region, I felt it was my opportunity to help influence the development of ecotourism in an appropriate and sustainable fashion, and assist in the success of conservation measures.

1.2 Research questions and objectives

I want to understand the range and complexity of issues that either will enhance or inhibit the planning for ecotourism development in Northern Thailand, and understand the processes by which ecotourism development can occur successfully. The following outline my research objectives:

1. To gain an understanding on a diversity of people's perceptions relating to ecotourism. This will be done by addressing the following research areas:
    - to determine the level of understanding about the concept of ecotourism;
    - to understand the perceived benefits and costs resulting from ecotourism;
    - to gain an impression of how Northern Thailand is perceived for ecotourism potential.

2. To explore and understand visitors' motivations for visiting natural areas in Northern Thailand by:
    - looking for evidence suggesting changing tourism trends in the region;
    - exploring their motives and interests, both natural and cultural.

3. To review current approaches in management of natural areas by:
    - assessing the links between provision of services and the visitors' interests and demands;
    - exploring visitors' suggestions for management issues that need to be addressed.

4. Examine Northern Thailand's opportunities for ecotourism activities by:
    - creating an inventory based on visitors' activities and recommendations;

- explore existing activities as promoted or provided in Chiang Mai;
- suggesting potentials, unrealized or understated, which may serve as sources for tourism economic diversification;
- by assessing some of the recommended sites by personal observations.

Secondary objectives include:

- the examination of ecotourism development for one key destination (Doi Inthanon National Park) in order to guide towards the management of a regional role model with qualities of transference to other regions of Thailand or beyond;
- to add to the findings of Glen Hvenegaard (Hvenegaard 1996) with respect to the high demand among ecotourists for nature treks, and to expand on some of his research questions pertaining to the management of Doi Inthanon National Park with respect to tourist demands and local participation in management and decision-making;
- to return to all the people that contributed and helped with this study, information that they have requested, as a way of thanking them for their assistance, and so that those who need the information most have it at hand;
- to contribute to the continued development of the ecotourism curriculum at Maejo University, in part by Thai students participating and sharing in the research I conducted in Thailand.

It was originally also the intention to contribute toward an appropriate ecotourism plan for the region around Chiang Mai, taking into account all potential attractions, and advise and plan for routes based on themes. Given the enormous diversity, the huge number of attractions, and extensive geography of the region, insufficient data was gathered to give the whole region justice in this manner.

This research project was undertaken at the same time as research conducted by Chris Fisher on interpretation and communication in protected areas in the same region. The collaboration is intentional. While my research concentrates on visitor perceptions and ecotourism issues in natural areas, Chris Fisher focuses on the interpretative services available and the provision of information. Together the studies are meant as a unit that will help lead the future development of ecotourism in a region in which this type of tourism is presently limited.

During my visit to Northern Thailand I received considerable help and support from so many different people, some of whom have a direct involvement with parks or local people, and others who were set to make my visit enjoyable and successful. Many people expressed an interest in the content of this thesis, and I made the promise to deliver all the information gathered during the trip. For this reason, the thesis is broad in its scope, covering a wide range of issues from general perceptions to the particular management issues at one small site. I owe all this information to the Thai people who were there to help and generously support me throughout my visit.

1.3 Organization of the thesis

The thesis is presented in a chapters-based format. Chapter 2 is a literature review of tourism issues in Thailand and a reflection of the current state of tourism in the northern regions with an analysis of the potential role of ecotourism. It describes the possible emerging need for nature-based ecotourism through changing tourist behaviours, changing local economies and in contributing to protected areas by generating revenue. Chapter 3 describes the methods employed in data collection and analysis, the sites chosen and an overview of the participants in the research. Chapter 4 examines the perceptions about ecotourism in terms of understanding, and the perceived benefits and costs, with a specific regard to Northern Thailand. Chapter 5 then explores the motivations and interests that drive people to visit the natural areas where research was conducted. Chapter 6 explores management issues at the various sites mostly by visitors' perceptions, while Chapter 7 is a regional exploration of ecotourism opportunities and potential. Chapter 8 examines Doi Inthanon National Park as an in depth case study and possible ecotourism role model for the region. Chapter 9 concludes the thesis.

1.4 Project history

This research project was made possible by Dr. Jim Butler's direct involvement with the Human Resources Development for Sustainable Agroforestry and Environmental Conservation in Northern Thailand, a Canadian International Development Agency supported Institutional Linkage Project between the University of Alberta, Maejo University in Chiang Mai, Thailand, and the Nabong College of Agriculture in Viantiane, the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Dr. Butler's global experience and expertise in protected areas, the people-wildlife interface and ecotourism, as well as his role as Professor of Parks, Wildlife and Ecotourism in the Department of Renewable Resources at the University of Alberta lead to his participation in this development project. Dr. Butler visited Maejo University and other parts of Thailand from August 30 - September 14 in 1995, to contribute within his field of expertise, particularly towards ecotourism development. He also served as Keynote Speaker at a national symposium "Ecotourism for this Decade", addressing the economics, conservation and social benefits of ecotourism, and to formulate an assessment of potential exchanges to strengthen the institutional linkage between Maejo University and the University of Alberta. Dr. Butler visited eleven different field sites noted to be tourism attractions (including four national parks) and concluded that the region would benefit greatly from an integrated ecotourism strategy.

CIDA had set aside funding to allow for the participation and exchange of graduate students to conduct research appropriate to the goals of the project. During his visit Dr. Butler identified that research concerning the management and potentials of ecotourism was needed for the region, and a proposal was put to the management committee. The Project is managed jointly by the Director Dr. Dhara Gill at the University of Alberta, and by the Chairman and Director in Thailand, Dr. Songvut Phetpradap.

Chapter 2

Tourism and Ecotourism in Northern Thailand

2.1 Tourism in Thailand

Many authors summarize the facts and figures for the exceptional growth in tourism that has been documented worldwide (for example see Hummel 1994; Eber 1992; Boo 1990). Thailand has been, still is, and will likely remain one of the major tourism destinations of Southeast Asia. Tourism visits to Thailand have exhibited a strong growth in recent years, and in 1992 receipts from visitor spending totalled US$4.8 billion, and total foreign arrivals were 5.7 million in 1993 (Waters 1994). It was estimated that for 1995, 6-7 million visits would have been made, generating US$6.1 billion in foreign currency (Dowling 1996). Tourism is the country's top foreign exchange earner and the country can claim to be the leading tourism destination in Asia. The success of the tourism industry can be attributed to the activities of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT). Originally established as the Tourism Organization of Thailand in 1960, it became the TAT in 1979. The TAT is heavily intertwined with the government, and is in a strong position to influence the government to act according to its wishes (Elliot 1983).

During the period of Thailand's Fourth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1977-1981), the principal objective of the Tourism Plan was to obtain more foreign exchange (Rojanasoonthon 1982). Other objectives included the intentions to help distribute the income more fairly, create more jobs and generate new investments and service products. It is easy for a foreign company to invest in Thailand if that company is registered in Thailand and incorporates Thai participation. Profits are readily moved out of the country (Elliot 1983). Eber (1992) cites a report by the National Institute for Development and Administration that states that as much as 60% of tourism revenue flows out of Thailand.

Literature about tourism in developing or newly industrialized nations frequently draws upon the theory of dependency where the underdevelopment of nations may result from the exploitative management by developed nations (Dos Santos 1970). This pattern of dependency can restrict the development of self-sufficiency and a healthy economy not dependent on external economic drives. It is, in part, a result of development processes that are largely western driven (Rudkin and Hall 1996). A move away from such dependency has been the focus of the National Economic and Social Development Plan, as it attempts to redress the loss of tourism revenue (Richter 1989, Rojanasoonthon 1982). In Thailand the existing tourism economy largely reflects the theory because profits are managed by overseas interests, notably the major hotels, and the theory is demonstrated by the 60% outflow of tourism revenue from the country (Eber 1992, Elliot 1983). Rodenberg (1980) highlights the problem that larger-scale tourism activities tend to import services rather than make use of local resources. Loss of control at the local level coupled with increased tourism development can lead to more negative attitudes at the local level (Chib 1980, Pizam 1978). Pretes (1988) considers this dependency phenomenon to be not only an international one, but also applicable on a national and regional level. For Northern Thailand the implications are that private and government groups in Bangkok and Chiang Mai become the controlling interests in tourism activities in outlying areas. The potential revenue in local regions is then fed back to the controlling interests in the major cities instead of remaining at the tourism destination.

The national government's Fifth Plan (1982-1986) had objectives primarily to alter the unfavourable balance of payments through efforts to generate a greater net income from tourism (Rojanasoonthon 1982). The second objective was to stimulate regional economic development and the third, a "distant third" as Richter (1989:87) described it, was to conserve and revive environmental and cultural assets, as well as historical places and monuments which are of benefit to social development. More recently, the Seventh National Economic and Social Development Plan (1992-1996) placed a greater emphasis on the environmental conservation of the country's tourist destinations, in part to protect its tourism base against neighbouring competitors (Chettamart and Emphandhu 1994).

With an emphasis on the social betterment for all, the TAT heavily promoted tourism to Northern Thailand, a region of considerable cultural diversity and poverty. Nearly one third of the nation's population lives below the "austere" poverty line (Richter 1989). As a result of this promotion, the number of visits to Chiang Mai, capital of this northern region, and to the surrounding hill-tribes escalated. Michaud (1994) cites a TAT report estimating over 500,000 visits were made to Chiang Mai in 1990. Through a lengthy and yet unfortunately undescribed calculation, Michaud argues that the more likely figure is over 1,500,000 visits. A large proportion of visitors endeavour to visit the hill-tribes, the individual nature of the experience desired being determined by the type of tourist, be it from immersion into a culture to a very brief visit. The advent of so many tourists has had a considerable effect on the cultures of the region. Many villages have undergone considerable changes that Rojanasoonthon (1982) considers too abrupt.

The nature of the tourist in Northern Thailand and the activity he or she is seeking has undergone an interesting evolution over the last twenty years. While the fascination for exposure to different cultures has long been a component of tourism (for a review of this as an attraction system see Smith 1996), nature-based tourism and ecotourism have become increasingly popular around the world. Further to the tourist demand, ecotourism is ethically set up to address the problems incurred from dependency, and to see that revenue is fairly distributed. By ensuring that revenue from tourism activities stays within the tourism destination community, the common outflow of revenue to controlling interests is lessened, the local community has increased benefits, and the dependency phenomenon is reduced. A greater degree of autonomy is experienced within a community, and they can become more active stakeholders in the operations through which they derive benefits.

With the rapid creation of many new protected areas in Thailand, the need to generate revenue from these areas is increasing. In light of the tourists' changing desires and expectations of this northern region, this chapter considers whether part of the existing tourist base may be seeking the nature-based tourism niche as a new attraction.

2.2 Ecotourism defined: an overview of definitions

"New tourism" is a generic term for responsible, sustainable, soft, and eco tourism (Pleumarom 1993). A wave of such new terms has consumed the industry, and provoked much discussion in the academic world. Many authors have dealt with defining these terms, and perhaps in the near future there will be a trend towards standardization of the definitions.

The broad theme for "sustainable tourism" as described in *Beyond the Green Horizon* (Eber 1992) is tourism and associated infrastructures that, both now and in the future:

- operate within natural capacities for the regulation and future productivity of natural resources;
- recognize the contribution that people and communities, customs and lifestyles make to the experience;
- accept that these people must have an equitable share in the economic benefits of tourism;
- are guided by the wishes of local people and communities in the host areas.

It is under this umbrella that ecotourism, for which there are many definitions, should fit. Boo (1990:xiv) uses one of the widely recognized and seminal definitions as formed by Ceballos-Lascurain, for which ecotourism is "tourism that involves travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas".

The Ecotourism Society offers a much shorter definition as "responsible travel to natural areas which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people" (Western 1993:8). An even shorter definition offered by the Society is simply put as "responsible travel".

To add confusion to the issue of defining tourism, nature tourism is frequently interchanged with ecotourism. Hvenegaard (1994) highlights this as a problem because nature tourism is often used more generally, and may lack the ethically sound or conservation motives required of an ecotourism venture. Whatever definition is ultimately used, ecotourism should have eight characteristics that define the activity and its ethics; these have gained increasing recognition (Hvenegaard 1994, Nelson 1994). As described by the Canadian Environmental Advisory Council (1991:42) the characteristics of ecotourism are that it:

- must promote positive environmental ethics;
- does not degrade the resource;
- concentrates on intrinsic rather than extrinsic values;
- is biocentric rather than anthropocentric in philosophy;
- must benefit the wildlife and environment socially, economically, scientifically, managerially or politically;
- is a first hand experience with the natural environment;
- has expectations for education and/or appreciation;
- has a high cognitive and affective experiential dimension.

The TAT (1995-1996:11) defines ecotourism as "a visit to any particular tourism area with the purpose to study, enjoy, and appreciate the scenery – natural and social – as well as the life style of the local people, based on the knowledge about responsibility for the ecological system of the area". The TAT thus concludes that tourists will go on group tours in search of the following:

- activities that help enhance their experiences;
- experiences from visiting natural attractions and/or from being exposed to a culture and social life different from their own;
- chances to learn natural characteristics and cultures which differ from one region to another;
- attempt to conserve the natural condition and cultural heritage of the place they visit.

It is apparent that the TAT definition considers cultural tourism to be under the umbrella of ecotourism. However, the western perspective frequently requires a stronger nature-based component for ecotourism, and cultural tourism readily fits under the category of sustainable tourism.

Ecotourism is sometimes promoted as an alternative to mass tourism. Hummel (1994) describes it as the "social construction of an ideal tourism", mass tourism being blamed for the negative impacts most frequently seen in developing countries. However, the concept of "mass ecotourism" exists and may be a product of western thinking (Pleumarom 1993). Passoff (1991) describes a fundamental difference between US tour operators and the host countries. The tour operators believe they must respond to the demand-side economy, while the host country may stress the supply-side. The supply-side conforms more to the sustainability of the ecotourism industry, and will less likely exceed social and ecological carrying capacities. The onus may also remain with the host governments who may be attracted to the mass tourism approach for faster economic returns. Such economic measures are frequently driven by Western influences of appropriate tourism planning, and sadly do not consider the impacts that tourism ventures will have on the indigenous peoples (Rudkin and Hall 1996).

The debate continues over the role, ethics and real value of ecotourism. Considered here is the value that such an industry may have for the regional economy and local communities and the protection of the environment, not least within the protected area framework in place in Northern Thailand. This potential has frequently been described in a general context for other areas (see Hemming 1993 and Hvenegaard 1994 for lists of evaluative studies).

For the purposes of this study, the definition used follows that of Ceballos-Lascurain, with the addition of a component covering improvement in local welfare as follows:

> *Ecotourism is tourism that involves travelling to natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals (as well as any existing past and present cultural manifestations found in these areas) while conserving the natural condition of the environment and improving the welfare of local people.*

This has been chosen as an appropriate and encompassing definition that incorporates the major components of ecotourism travel, the purposes for which fit adequately in Northern Thailand considering its wealth of natural sites and diversity of culture.

Tourists, their activities and their effects on the cultures warrant further consideration, in both the past and present, before presenting the concept of ecotourism as a potential, timely saviour of protected areas and as a driving force for the long term sustainability of tourism to Northern Thailand.

2.3 Geography of Northern Thailand

Northern Thailand is a landlocked region of the country, bordered by Myanmar to the west and Laos to the east. Eleven provinces make up the northern region on which this study focuses. The provinces of Tak, Sukhothai and Uttaradit mark the southern extremities with the Central Plains and northeastern Thailand (Figure 2.1). The city of Chiang Mai is Thailand's second largest city, after Bangkok, and is the focal point of the north from which most tourism originates. Seven provinces are described as tourist provinces (Thaiways 1996). Nan, Phayao, Phrae and Uttaradit are not considered to be tourist provinces.

The region is largely mountainous, with several north-south chains composed of limestone or granite formations, interspersed with lowland basins. The rivers Ping, Nan, Yom, and Wang drain southwards into the Chao Phraya River that runs through Bangkok. Other rivers drain into the Salween River bordering Myanmar, or into the Mekhong River that runs into Laos. The topographical diversity and marked seasonal rainfall give rise to a diversity of forest types. Elevation ranges from 200 metres in the basins to Thailand's highest point Doi Inthanon at 2565 metres. Forests vary from lowland deciduous dipterocarp, to broad-leaved hill evergreen forest interspersed with stands of native pine (Lekagul and Round 1991).

2.4 Hill-trekking, past and present

With an annual documented visitor influx of over half a million to Chiang Mai, the largest city of Northern Thailand, hill-tribe cultures face a potentially huge exposure to different cultures and societies. Hill-tribes are one of the key attractions and motives for visiting Northern Thailand (Dearden and Harron 1994). Based on mode of transportation, there are two main types of tourist activity involving the hill-tribes: the tribal village tour and the jungle tour (Cohen 1982). The tribal village tour involves a bus trip to a village for the duration of a few hours, to see a well-developed community, and to buy souvenirs. This has been described as a daytrip for the package deal tourist

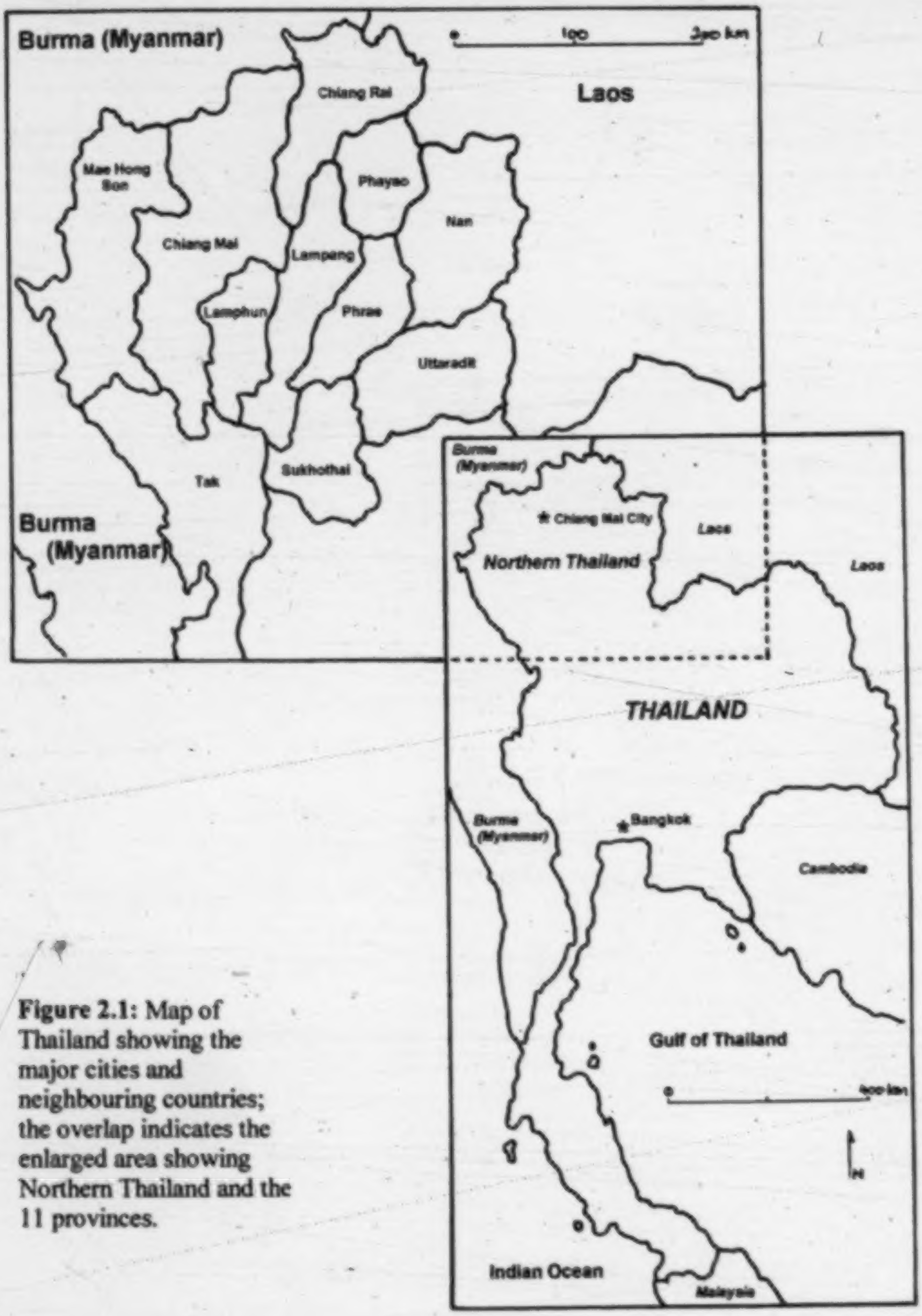
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Figure 2.1: Map of Thailand showing the major cities and neighbouring countries; the overlap indicates the enlarged area showing Northern Thailand and the 11 provinces.

(Michaud 1994). The jungle tour is based on trekking in a group of five to ten with a guide, for the duration of three to ten days (Dearden 1991). This tour is more dispersed and involves a greater interaction between hosts and guests, with considerably more impact on the local culture (Dearden 1989).

The jungle tour, or trekking, annually attracted more than 100,000 trekking tourists to the region at the beginning of this decade, although Dearden (1991) considered this to be a conservative figure. This influx of trekkers leaves an estimated US$2,000,000 within the hill-tribe villages.

The attraction for the trekking activity stems from the tremendous cultural diversity represented within a relatively small geographical region of Northern Thailand. There are twenty-three different ethnic groups, six of which (Karen, Mien, Hmong, Akha, Lahu and Lisu) represent the majority (Bhruksasri 1989). The hill-trekking activity and its effects have undergone a complex evolution over the last twenty years. Two broad themes highlight the changes that have taken place: the type of tourist undertaking the activity and nature of the activities sought, and how and whether villages have shown adaptation to the tourist influx.

2.4.1 *Nature of the hill-trekker and the activity being sought*

Cohen (1979) broadly characterized the typical hill-trekker of the late 1970s as a budget traveller, an explorer on a worldwide level, and perhaps fringing on the "hippie culture". He proceeds to describe a shift towards an albeit cost-conscious but young, professional profile, usually from a developed country. Cohen also describes a typology of the tourists according to the depth of experience they seek. The "existential" tourist (or purist) seeks an involved cultural experience, with total authenticity in as remote an environment as possible. Next is the "experiential" tourist for whom authenticity is still important but who may not be seeking such direct and pure involvement. Then there is the "recreational" tourist who puts little or no emphasis on authenticity, and is either oblivious to or does not mind being misled by, for example, staged traditional dances. A study by Dearden and Harron (1994) suggests a shift from the existential to the recreational tourists has occurred in Northern Thailand. There has been a distinct shift to the recreational experience where fulfillment is derived from other activities such as elephant riding and river rafting. Both of these activities were considered additional activities seven years ago, but according to Dearden and Harron's survey in 1994, about 90% of hill-trekkers were doing both. Clearly a demand for new activities has arisen in recent years. This may be a compensatory shift to draw attention away from the reduced hill-tribe authenticity, and an adaptive change by villagers to provide new services to accommodate a new breed of tourist, or to satisfy a latent demand that had not been previously recognized nor responded to.

This shift in tourist type may be further expanded upon by Plog's (1991) proposed allocentric and psychocentric tourists. Cohen's existential tourist can be likened to the allocentric tourist: intellectually curious, a risk taker and an explorer of untamed destinations. The recreational tourist can be equated more to the psychocentric, perhaps best being described as mid-centric (see Figure 2.2), preferring a more secure and comfortable experience, with a fixed schedule and guide. The more psychocentric individuals would likely be the package-deal day-trippers to the villages, as described earlier. Figure 2.2 suggests a minority of allocentric existentialists, a type who might well be (if they haven't already been) driven out of Northern Thailand in the near future, as facilitated hill-trekking spreads to even the remotest of regions. This is an example of displacement, in which those displaced must seek out new destinations.

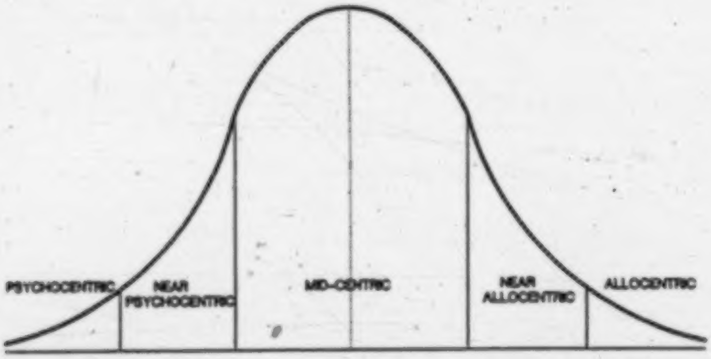

Figure 2.2: Distribution of tourist psychographic segments according to Plog (1991), where vertical scale is the number of tourists.

In the nearer future Michaud (1994) suggests that more attention will be focused on neighbouring Vietnam, Laos and the Yunnan province of China, now that these countries have begun to open up and as a result of their comparatively cheaper fees for similar experiences. In contrast, little mention has been made of neighbouring Burma and Cambodia.

In light of the concept of the "global village" it may be that the purist will become a thing of the past. To save themselves, Plog (1991:129) suggests that the allocentric and near-allocentric types will shift towards new foci: rediscovering the forgotten and the overlooked; seeking new adventure, soft and hard; escaping to quiet and exclusivity; and pursuing special interests. Ecotourism may well fit under the latter category, though no mention is made of this specifically. Plog warns that each pattern of activity demonstrates a new trend that will be emulated in the near future by other types of travellers.

New activities being sought by the recreational tourist have already been mentioned, such as elephant riding and river rafting. Shafroth (1991) describes another less well known kind of hill-trekking activity that may reduce the tourist's perception of bringing about damaging cultural change, and at the same time provides a more fulfilling experience. He describes a working trek that is a growing phenomenon aimed at righting the wrongs of conventional trekking. These working treks involve tourists who work in poverty-stricken villages, ultimately bringing medicine, schools, water systems and new agricultural practices through their direct actions and through donations. This type of activity suits the more culturally and socially aware tourists who, while wanting to have a close encounter with a traditional culture, do not see themselves as exploiting the social resource for their own gains. Instead they may feel that they are contributing to sustainable development in a more desirable manner. This tourism activity may highlight a trend towards a more responsible and sustainable form of tourism in its own unique and direct way. Shafroth (1991) quotes Pipat, leader of this new trekking movement:

> *"Our world is too small to stop people from coming here, so we must work together and share. We must learn from each other, and do something to help each other. It can't just be take, take, take."*

2.4.2 *Hill-tribe villages and the tourist influx*

The villages are exposed to tourists in two main ways, first, by being part of the tribal village tour circuit, and second, as part of the jungle trek route (Cohen 1982). The villages on the tribal village tour circuit tend to be the well-developed, culturally altered and easily accessible villages. Historically these villages would have formed a component of the jungle trek, but visitor frequency and development have both altered their very essence. Butler's logistic curve (Butler 1980) may be used to illustrate the changes a village undergoes, the curve representing the number of tourists visiting and the stages a village goes through (see Figure 2.3).

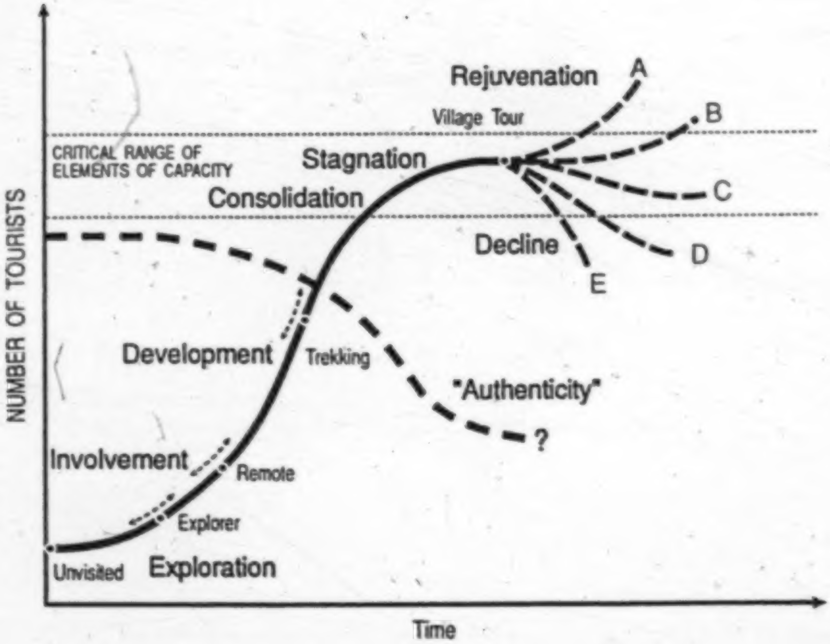

Figure 2.3: Butler's (1980) logistic curve showing stages for villages in relationship to time and authenticity of trekking experience. *Source:* as modified by Dearden 1991:403

Dearden (1989) suggests that many tribal villages are at the unvisited stage of the curve, because of the remoteness of the village and/or the unwillingness of the inhabitants to tolerate visitors. He suggests they will likely remain unvisited. Initial infiltration or exploration is usually carried out by a guide seeking new business. The guide tries to gain the trust of the village elders, and once gained, early visits are conducted in the traditional form of hospitality, with no cash transactions occurring. Visits may become more frequent, especially as other guides hear about the new destination. Cash transactions become a key component of the experience for both host and guest. With the advent of cash comes a change in the villager's perception of what the tourist has to offer, especially if visitor frequency is such that trekkers may be staying every night. When the influx reaches such a level, special infrastructures may be built to accommodate trekkers, and any activity or spectacle demands its price. Items previously offered as gifts to guests instead command a price, and local handicrafts may be made for the sole purpose of being sold to tourists. With the advent of a new income, the villagers have a new purchasing power used to buy non-traditional items to which they may recently have been exposed (Dearden 1991).

Once a village has reached this degree of attraction and development, it enters the critical stage of stagnation. The trekker's perception of authenticity drops, and the trekker who is demanding the more authentic experience may shift his or her attentions elsewhere. Many villages have reached this critical stage, and some, despite their earlier reputation as a major destination, have seen a dramatic decline in visitation. Such a "boom and bust" tourism approach will have its inevitable and undesirable social impacts (Dearden and Harron 1994). These villages have demonstrated an inability to assimilate tourism sustainably, through no fault of their own, but perhaps through the rapid exposure and acculturation they have faced. In this they may have been either willing or unwilling participants.

The determination of authenticity of a culture is not an easy task. Michaud (1995) criticizes Dearden's attachment to the word, and questions how he determined a village's authenticity during his studies. Authenticity implies a pure and original state of cultural tradition, but cultures are dynamic and constantly changing. The western perspective is to deem a culture less authentic as it undergoes changes through time. Perhaps this is an example of the new wave of what some see as the new imperialism, as the western world seeks to suppress what might be natural changes in a demanding society.

Other villages have rejuvenated their tourism industries. This has been achieved through the successful conversion from being a jungle trek destination, to a tribal village tour (Dearden 1989). This change represents a great increase in visitation for a village, but for shorter time periods for each visitor.

From the two scenarios above, it is evident that some villages have shown a greater ability to accommodate tourism, and acculturate, while others have not fared so well. Thus, for some villages the tourism might be described as sustainable, as "sustainability relates, in part, to the ability of the tourism resource to withstand visitation pressure, and the ongoing desires of visitors to see the resource" (Dearden and Harron 1994:98). The perception of sustainability may vary with respect to personal standpoint. The villager may believe sustainability has been demonstrated, as tourism continues to be a contributor to the local economy. However, from the jungle trekker standpoint, the village has failed as a result of its shift to a more commercially oriented tourism to which the trekker is no longer suited.

On a regional perspective, the long-term sustainability of the trekking industry may be in question. Dearden and Harron describe the regional status as sustainable in light of the mobility of the trekking industry and the ability to shift to villages that can still offer that high degree of authenticity. Locally, though, it remains unsustainable. They caution the life expectancy of this "sustainable" industry, as there are geographical limits that confine its inexorable spread. Dearden and Harron cite one tour manager who gave the industry only five more years (in its existing form).

The activity of hill-trekking doubtless has its critics, and may be perceived as the most pervasive force acting on traditional culture. On an annual basis, an overwhelming 200,000 visitors pour into Ban Doi Pui, Thailand's most visited hill-tribe in Doi Suthep-Pui National Park (Elliott and Beaver 1993). There are, however, a number of other pressures that the hill-tribes face. Traditionally the villagers were swidden agriculturalists, but in light of increasing populations, deforestation and decreased soil fertility, the government has sought to redress the social and environmental problems by encouraging communities to stay resident at one site, and adopt unfamiliar agricultural practices such as market gardening (Dearden 1989). Tourism may well have an important role in encouraging communities to do just this (Dearden 1991).

Further to coping with agricultural change, the government denied the villagers the revenue from opium by banning all of its trade. This has created further hardship, and resulted in an increased dependency on other forms of income such as that derived from the tourist industry (Tan-Kim-Yong and Boonto 1995). At the same time, other pervasive forces include missionaries, aid programs, penetration by market forces, and the media.

Through the various influencing forces, there is pressure for the hill-tribe cultures to change. As they become more sedentary, and as their societies become more cash-based, perhaps, as Dearden and Harron (1994) optimistically note, trekking may have a positive role in helping them come to terms with the future. Many villages have discovered that tourism can yield additional income, and services on offer to tourists have shown considerable diversification (in the form of elephant riding and river rafting), thereby accommodating the changing tourist needs. Diversification may act as a measure to compensate for the decreasing authenticity of the hill-tribe cultures by shifting attention away from cultural attractions to environment attractions. Trekking, properly controlled perhaps by the government, but with considerable input from the communities most affected, may prolong the life of the industry. Dearden (1991) stresses that communication with the hill-tribes themselves is the fundamental component missing from all previous decisions made. As diversification has occurred, it seems that one potential avenue, nature tourism, has remained unexplored (Dearden 1991). There is the potential that nature tourism may have a valuable role to play in sustaining these communities.

2.5 The role of nature-based tourism

Nature-based tourism is in part driven by people's desire to observe and connect with nature, notably wild animals. A love, appreciation and respect for nature and the natural experience are some of the essences of ecotourism. Wilson (1984) describes this emotional phenomenon among people to have an affiliation or connection to other organisms as biophilia. This phenomenon has implications for the significance of and need for conservation and the protection of floral and faunal resources. Chapman (1998) summarizes the evidence that suggests people need nature, and in demonstrating the human need to connect to nature, validates the biophilia hypothesis. In addition Chapman demonstrates a preference among research participants for large wildlife, a fact that may have implications for Northern Thailand given the lack of "charismatic megafauna" in the region.

Nature, in its various forms, is abundant in the parks and sanctuaries of Thailand, but the potential to attract nature-based tourism remains largely unexplored (Brockelman and Dearden 1990). In the name of ecotourism, various developments have been undertaken by the TAT to promote tourism to National Parks. Khao Yai National Park, close to Bangkok, acquired a golf course and resort. However, deer were later found dead having swallowed golf balls, and elephants were reported to have fallen down embankments created in the cutting of new roads (Dowling 1996). Consequently, activities like this were phased out to a certain extent. The extensive tree-felling for construction of the road in Khao Yai also created a road too wide for gibbons to cross, thereby isolating the populations and diminishing their ranges (Eber 1992). Similarly, many marine parks have become inundated with tourism and its associated pollution, supporting arguments that tourism and conservation of the natural environment are not entirely compatible (Pleumarom 1993). These past and present actions encroach on the environmental integrity, but before the term ecotourism is criticized, consideration may be needed that the semantics of the western world do not or did not equate to those of Thailand. Lessons can be learned from past actions, and hopefully applied to new ventures in protected areas of Northern Thailand as the government seeks to protect ever more of its depleted resources.

2.5.1 *A history of protected areas in Thailand*

The first national park, Khao Yai, was established in 1961 (Gray *et al* 1994). Historically, the desire to protect areas stemmed from a focus on specific animals and plants. More recently the emphasis has changed. Extensive flooding around Chiang Mai in the mid to late 80s mobilized the rural communities to protest the continued felling of trees. This encouraged the government to ban all logging concessions in December 1988 (McNeely and Dobias 1991). Now the very existence of a forest merits the creation of new protected areas (Ghimire 1991). Forests may be protected under national park, wildlife sanctuary, forest reserve or non-hunting area status. It is the government's feeling that forests are better protected under park or sanctuary status; thus there has been a move to increase lands under such a designation. As a consequence of corruption and loopholes in land title laws, forest reserves are inadequately protected as developers can readily claim the land (Grove 1996).

Since the establishment of the first park, expansion of the park system has been rapid. In 1993, the United Nations List of National Parks and Protected Areas, prepared by the WCMC and IUCN Commission on National Parks and Protected Areas, reported that there were 74 Category II national parks, 36 Category IV wildlife sanctuaries, and 1 Category V protected landscape in Thailand. Together these cover an area of more than 7 million hectares. In 1991, Ghimire wrote that the present level of protected areas covered 16.3% of the country, and that the government intended to increase this to 25% by the end of the then upcoming Five Year Plan (1992-1996). The actual forested land area is disputed, official estimates ranging from 25 to 28%, while environmental organizations claim it is less than 20% (Gray *et al* 1994).

The parks are popular tourism destinations, especially for the domestic market. Of all visits made to parks, 95% are made by residents of Thailand (Gray *et al* 1994; Kasetsart University Faculty of Forestry 1987). A study by the Natural Resources and Environment Program, in conjunction with the Harvard Institute for International Development (1995), showed that as few as 1.5% of visitors to Khao Yai were foreign. Clearly few of the 6-7 million projected visitors per year are visiting parks. The estimated annual figure for park visitation for the mid 90s was expected to be around 12 million; in 1990 arrivals were in excess of 8 million (Gray *et al* 1994). It is, however, encouraging to see such a high level of interest in the Thai heritage amongst the Thais themselves.

2.5.2 *Problems in protected areas*

Perhaps the most evident problem in many of the parks is over-development, especially with respect to tourism ventures. Many of the older marine parks have attained such levels of development that the title of a national park becomes questionable. Too many tourists mean more pressure on the environment, leading to significant degradation in some of the marine parks (Steele 1995, Gray *et al* 1994, Pleumarom 1993, Eber 1992).

Parks in Northern Thailand receive their share of mass tourism. One of Thailand's most important tourist attractions is Doi Suthep-Pui National Park, a park that boasts the stunning Doi Suthep temple (Wat Prathart Doi Suthep). More than half a million visitors a year come to the park, largely for the resident hill-tribe cultures and the spiritually acclaimed temple. Associated tourism development and the movement of villagers drawn to the prospect of deriving an income from tourism, contribute to the 44% of the park now deforested (Elliott and Beaver 1993). Similarly, the IUCN has singled out Doi Inthanon National Park (amongst others) as facing a serious threat to its environmental integrity partly as a consequence of uncontrolled tourism development (Gray *et al* 1994).

Tourism is not the only force working against the interests of protected areas. The managing Royal Department of Forestry is failing to generate sufficient revenue to staff and manage the parks at an appropriate level. The National Parks Division has only 23% of the required manpower (McNeely and Dobias 1991). Lack of staff to police parks means easy poaching, and poaching camps are readily found even in Khao Yai, Thailand's most renowned park (Brockelman and Dearden 1990). Illegal logging still occurs, further reducing the forest resource. An estimated 60% of the 8600 persons living within 5km of Doi Inthanon National Park rely on illegal collection activities (McNeely and Dobias 1991).

Poor relations between the local residents and the managing department exacerbate park management problems. The Royal Department of Forestry has sought to move people out of protected areas in the past. This happens rarely now, not through a change in attitude, but simply due to the lack of available land on which to move people to (Ghimire 1991). Under such circumstances the residents have been given smaller plots of land on which people have failed to subsist. As a consequence, they have sought economic refuge directly from the forest, thereby accelerating deforestation. Poor relations means poor cooperation, and the local perception of "lost village resources" is seen as one of the major threats protected areas face. Lack of incentives for local people to conserve a resource rule out the possibility of a totally preservationist approach to protection (Barnes *et al* 1992).

Despite the mistakes of the past, the TAT is still enthusiastic to develop mass tourism in parks. Ventures in "ecotourism" are still promoted, while perhaps not always conforming to the ethical principles of ecotourism. New attempts have been made to establish tourism zones within parks that would revoke their park status. Despite the protection afforded to protected areas by law, "developers, backed by influential politicians, military officers and corrupt government officials, have constantly committed encroachments and other illegalities without serious persecution" (Pleumarom 1993:16-17).

The pressures on protected areas are evidently considerable, and some may argue that developing ecotourism within these areas will further degrade the environmental integrity of the region. Without strict controls and regulation, and the cooperation of the local people, this will most certainly be the case. Given appropriate guidelines to follow, and with motives less geared directly to increasing tourism numbers and revenue, then ecotourism in natural areas can be sustainable and benefit local communities through watershed protection and welfare. Unfortunately, with current understaffing and underfunding issues, strict management is hard to enforce, and the potential for corruption is huge, especially in some of the remote and less accessible regions of the north.

There has been reason enough for criticism of the ecotourism industry. Western (1993) describes the danger in the concept of ecotourism; it builds up expectations and raises the risk of a "hit and run" tourism where ecotourists flood to the latest attraction, degrade it, and rush off somewhere else. Thus, carrying capacities need strict enforcement. There are difficulties in establishing capacities for new parks. Parks like Khao Yai remain largely undeveloped, with nearly all tourism activities confined to 10% of the area (Sherman and Dixon 1991). Localized heavy damage could be prevented by spreading out the tourism activities, but at the same time this could compromise the integrity of the whole park. Griffin (1994) advocates dispersion, but stresses that care must be taken, staff should be capable of managing the expansion, and before this, existing trails should be improved and promoted.

A common proposal for minimizing visitor influx, is in setting a park entrance fee that discriminates against the majority. The theme is high price, low quantity (Barnes *et al* 1992). This leads to the claim that ecotourism is an elitist activity, limited to the well off. Barnes points out that this kind of approach should be combined with a program that allows access for local communities so that they too can share in the resource.

In order to determine carrying capacities of protected areas, Western and Henry (1979) write that the visitors' stated preference, actual viewing behaviour, and flexibility in response to interpretive services need to be known. Hvenegaard (1994) describes steps that should be taken to minimize environmental impacts, such as baseline research to develop limits of acceptable change against which all activities can be monitored. Thailand may be at an advantage with respect to the future management and planning of nature-based tourism activities. Due to the near complete lack of existing activities, the government has an opportunity to manage the industry in a sustainable and cautious manner. The hill-trekking industry has dramatically shown what can happen if it is unregulated, and while societies may be more adaptable to changes in the long term, it may be much less prudent to gamble with the environment. Butler's (1980) logistic curve for tourism may well be applied to parks. The decaying authenticity curve could be replaced with ecological integrity, and the same trends would apply (see Figure 2.4). The question arises over how the industry would be able to rejuvenate itself under significantly damaged integrity. Likewise the model could be applied at the regional level for Northern Thailand. With a failure to generate new tourism activities for the recreationist, visitor numbers could stagnate. Nature-based ecotourism could be the rejuvenating force to save the trekking industry.

2.5.3 *Benefits of nature-based ecotourism*

The benefits of nature-based ecotourism are widely advocated, as are the problems it introduces (for example, see Boo 1990). Considering all the problems that the beleaguered Thai environment is facing, the benefits of nature-based tourism could be a positive alternative to development, provided it is managed in an appropriate and sustainable manner.

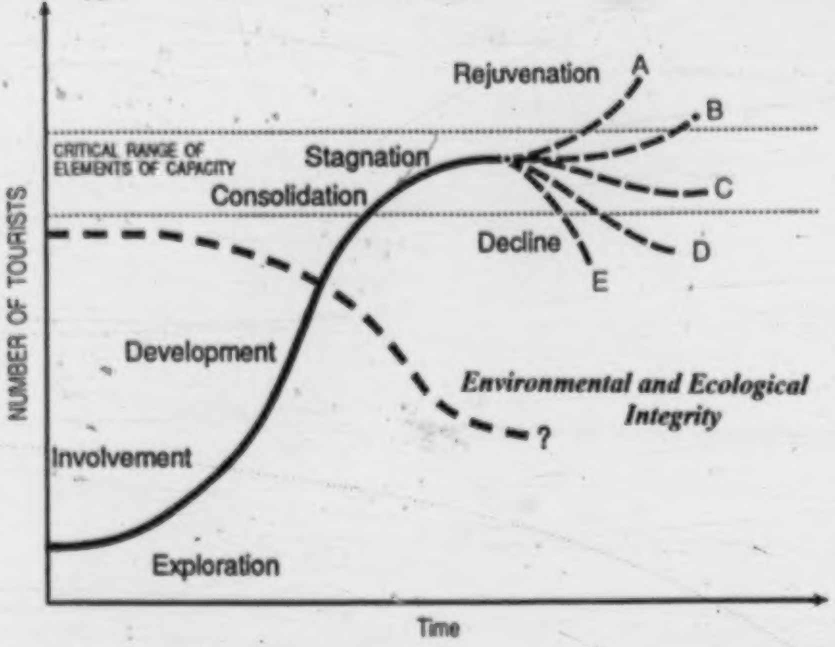

Figure 2.4: Figure 2.3 adapted to show the possible relationship of tourism to time and environmental degradation.

The promotion of nature-based ecotourism to protected areas would increase the revenue taken in by the managing authorities. The revenue generated could be greatly enhanced if the recommendations of many authors (such as Hvenegaard 1996, NREP and HIID 1995, Griffin 1994, Sherman and Dixon 1991, McNeely and Dobias 1991, Trisurat 1989) were enacted. Currently parks like Khao Yai provide services to visitors, the cost of which exceeds the entrance fee. There is no need for Thailand to subsidize the cost of entry for foreign visitors. The study by NREP and HIID (1995) shows that Thais themselves are willing to pay four times the existing entrance fee for the same privileges, while foreigners are prepared to pay up to thirty times as much. Sherman and Dixon (1991) describe the Mountain Gorilla Project in Rwanda where foreigners pay an entrance fee of $170 per day, and demand continues to remain strong. A dramatic increase in revenue is feasible, and this could be used to expand the workforce, providing better patrols and park services generally. This need for revenue will likely grow stronger as more areas are protected in the coming years, and while external financial assistance may have been forthcoming in the past, this may well diminish as other countries compete for the same assistance as they, too, increase their protected areas (Ghimire 1991).

The involvement of locals with ecotourism has recognized value, and should be incorporated into the planning process (Brandon 1993). Brockelman and Dearden (1990) explored the role nature-trekking had in a local community near Khao Yai National Park in an attempt to enhance the positive values of the park. Improvement of relations with the local villagers is key to the successful protection of the forests. By involving locals and paying them respectable wages for trekking services, their perception of the park altered, poaching diminished, and wild animals were seen in the vicinity of the village for the first time in ten years. The work of the patrol guards was eased as relations improved and cooperation increased.

Existing visitors to parks have expressed their desires and concerns in numerous studies. In Doi Suthep-Pui National Park, 66% of visitors complained about forest destruction, 73% complained about the lack of guidebooks and area maps, and 75% complained about the lack of wildlife viewing facilities (Elliott 1993, Elliott and Beaver 1993). Clearly the desire to experience nature is there. In Khao Yai, which in considering its notoriety one might expect better facilities, two thirds of the visitors expressed a desire for more observation towers, birdwatching sites and the development of new attractions, as well as better information on park trails, flora and fauna (NREP and HIID 1995).

Improving park information facilities has long-term advantages. Environmental education is an essential activity for fostering a greater understanding of the local ecosystems. Nature-based tourism would benefit from effective interpretation. This is gradually being recognized in Thailand, with the construction of a nature education and information centre in Doi Suthep-Pui National Park (Elliott and Beaver 1993). The demand is there, and visits are certainly abundant. The park could certainly benefit from a new sense of appreciation. Doi Suthep-Pui's proximity to Chiang Mai makes it an ideal pilot centre for nature education and information initiatives because it is so close to the city; more residents have the potential to be exposed to the virtues and issues of the park (Elliott and Beaver 1992). Interpretive programs have also been recommended for Phu

Rua National Park as tools to explain park management policies, as well as for information on flora and fauna (Trisurat 1989). This could help change local attitudes to protected areas, provided that local communities are involved and have access to the protected area.

The development of a nature-based tourism industry that conforms to the moral and ethical framework of ecotourism and sustainable tourism faces further challenges from the TAT. One attitude within the TAT is amply demonstrated by a quote from one official, "What is wrong with mass ecotourism?" (Pleumarom 1993:17). More recently their attitude has shown signs of change, and a recognition that they need to and would like to know more about ecotourism (Hanpachern, pers. comm.). The TAT has been the driving force behind tourism development. The TAT, for example, runs most of the tourism operations within Khao Yai National Park, and all the profits are removed from the park (Barnes *et al* 1992). The Parks Division needs to gain a bigger hold on activities within, and benefit from increased revenue. This would also favour local participation in services, if the whole operation is locally managed, rather than managed from provincial and national capitals.

To establish and market nature-based tourism well, Brockelman and Dearden (1990) stress the need for a theme. This way, appropriate interest is generated. Historically, themes have focused on big animals, or "charismatic megafauna". Unfortunately for Northern Thailand, many of these animals have been extirpated from parks due to excessive development and degradation. Inventories for Doi Suthep-Pui reveal little in the way of large mammals (Elliott and Beaver 1992), but do show a staggering diversity of smaller flora and fauna. A new focus or theme will be required to draw in ecotourists.

The ease of establishing a new focus to attract ecotourists by local people in ecotourism management may be hindered by a parochial perception, which is described as the invisibility of intrinsic attributes of a region to its residents (Butler pers. comm.). Miller (1995:41) describes parochialism as "resulting from superficial familiarity with an object such as a landscape, resulting in a general lack of appreciation for special, unique or otherwise attractive or appealing qualities". Miller stresses the importance of considering this phenomenon in land use planning for ecotourism. While Canadians are astonished at the concept of tourists coming to Canada hoping to see a beaver, perhaps the tourism industry of Northern Thailand is similarly governed by perceptions that fail to recognize intrinsic values that may have ecotourism potential. Chapman (1998) explored the visitors' preference for wildlife species in Elk Island National Park, Canada. He concluded that a difference could be found between rural and urban residents of Alberta. Rural Albertans were used to seeing beaver, coyote and moose, some of which were even considered to be pests, and these animals were not an important part of their wildlife experience in the park. However, these animals had much more significance in a favourite wildlife experience among urban Albertans who were not used to seeing such animals. The issue of parochial perception may extend beyond nature to cultural issues such as the spiritual significance of nature in Buddhism, which is a significant Thai value that has been recognized in academic disciplines (Bänziger 1992, Bänziger 1988).

Brockelman and Dearden (1990) caution that nature-trekking should not be promoted amongst the general tourists, but restricted to special interest tourists. The 100,000 or so hill-trekkers are arguably not generalist tourists in the activities they seek to experience, although their knowledge and expectations of the nature components may be more general in nature. Their desires for experiencing nature-related activities would benefit from further research. In light of the shift towards the recreational hill-trekker, perhaps the demands for a more sophisticated infrastructure will increase. This goes against the commonly recognized wants and needs of "typical" ecotourists, who are drawn to small scale, dispersed activities, and have little need for comfortable facilities (Hemming 1993). The development of ecotourism attractions is facilitated in this way, since few radical changes are needed to accommodate a less-demanding ecotourist.

Duffus and Dearden (1990) differentiate wildlife tourists into generalists and specialists. Using their definitions, the purer ecotourist is the specialist. They suggest that with time, the proportion of wildlife specialists will decline relative to the generalists (Figure 2.5). As a result of the existing tourism base, and the potential "rush" of hill- trekkers seeking nature-based tourism activities, it is conceivable that the specialist will have a very minor role to play, depending on how the management of establishing the industry is approached. Some of the parks cover a considerable area,

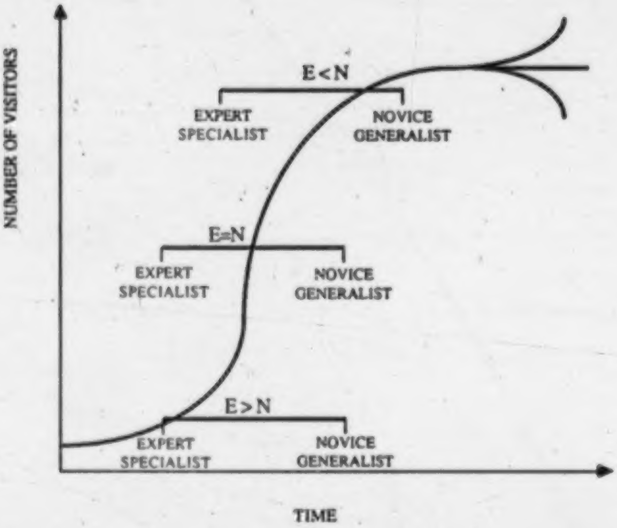

Figure 2.5: The relationship of user specialization and site evolution. *Source:* Duffus and Dearden (1990:223).

and there may be room for both. Parks could be zoned for this purpose, just as some villages were zoned to handle the arrival of the tribal village tour contingent. This way heavy use tourism could be confined to environmentally "tolerant" areas, while special interest tourism may get the benefit of a more visually pristine, or untouched, natural experience.

2.5.4 *Local participation*

The nature-trekking initiative explored by Brockelman and Dearden (1990) demonstrates some distinct advantages and changes in perception as a result of local participation. As the remoter communities become more cash-based, it is likely that economic incentives will be the driving force behind successful protection of natural areas. This demands local participation in planning and in the running of park services or concessions. Negative attitudes are said to increase with more tourism development and loss of local control (Chib 1980, Pizam 1978). Clad (1984:72-73) is of the opinion that, "the starting point for cooperation with tribal peoples or their advocates is to recognize that national society *and* the indigenes need to be persuaded that conservation objectives can be married to the quest for better aboriginal entitlement, to the lasting benefit of all parties. It is not an easy task, but it is one worth doing, and worth doing well". Dearden *et al* (1996) consider the failure to include locals in management issues an injustice. Ecotourism, small scale by nature, is a tourist enterprise that relies more heavily on local supplies and labour while larger ventures tend to import these services (Rodenberg 1980).

The success of an innovation (such as ecotourism) in a community is dependent on the adoption of that innovation where the speed of adoption is dependent on increasing knowledge (Rogers 1983). Increased education and knowledge can encourage a positive perspective on innovations that are designed to instill conservation practices and ethics (Dolsen 1986). Dolsen (1986) summarizes five basic steps that lead towards the adoption or rejection of an innovation. These are awareness, interest, evaluation, trial, and adoption or rejection. Awareness promotes interest, which leads to evaluation and trial. Depending on the satisfaction of the outcomes of the trial, the innovation is then adopted or rejected. In turn, Rogers and Shoemaker (1971) describe five variables that determine the rate of adoption of the innovation. Briefly, these are:

- the perceived attributes of the innovation;
- the type of innovation decision-making (for example by collective or authority);
- the communication channels employed (from mass media to interpersonal);
- the nature of the social system and applicability of the communication approaches;
- and the extent of promotion efforts by agents of change.

Miller (1995) asserts that information flow must be forthcoming from the change agents regardless of how far the adoption process has proceeded. In addition to long-term support and communication, Murphy (1985) stresses that development must occur at a pace appropriate to local conditions, otherwise the tourism and host industries will fail. This is especially the case for ecotourism, given its emphasis on local benefits and involvement.

Dolsen (1986) established that with increased awareness fishermen were more likely to comply and adopt conservation measures, and Maw (1989) concluded that visitor perceptions about bears became less negative with an increase in knowledge. The implications are that awareness and knowledge are critical at the local level for a greater chance at establishing a successful ecotourism innovation.

In the ecotourism context, the early adopters will have to recognize the benefits associated with ecotourism. As one community will be the first to undertake the management of an ecotourism project, there may be doubt within the community as to the plausibility of the innovation. The required benefits or factors at the trial level will include that there is an appropriate level of local management and involvement, and that there will be an improvement in local welfare in social, economic and environmental capacities. Further, the adopters must not incur any significant costs that may undermine their faith in ecotourism as an alternative source of income.

Judging from the tourist motives for hill-trekking discussed by Dearden and Harron (1994), it is likely that visitor satisfaction of an experience is greater if the guide is of local origin. This may represent one way of spreading the benefits of nature tourism to the local communities. A number of problems arise, however, to which Brockelman and Dearden (1990) make reference. Guides need to be bilingual, and have an expertise and knowledge geared to the visitor requirements. While local villagers have considerable knowledge and customs associated with the forest, the problem arises in accessing that knowledge. What may be required is an educated Thai natural historian, who can involve a local guide for his singular knowledge, and translate in the process. Clearly the qualified guide will require many skills in order to satisfy the demands of the ecotourist. Much can be learned from the local communities: the Karen in Thung Yai Wildlife Sanctuary understand the forest ecosystem better than most, having lived sustainably within it for centuries (Thongmak and Hulse 1993). In the meantime, the government has been trying to move this tribe out of the sanctuary, as they falsely perceive them to be a threat to the ecological integrity of this recently designated World Heritage Site.

In improving relations between the managing authorities and the local people, Brockelman and Dearden (1990) perceive a favourable role for the nature-trekker, that of the "third party intervener". The intervener bridges the communication barriers with the government, and brings benefits to the poorer communities. In this way local communities are seeing and understanding benefits, rather than just being told what those potential benefits might be.

2.6 Summary

Tourism, like society in general, is an ever-changing, dynamic entity. The trends in Northern Thailand may show a need for nature-based tourism. The protected areas themselves benefit from appropriate tourism in many respects. This, for some, may seem to be a paradox, and can be seen as exploitation of Thailand's last remaining frontiers. Unfortunately Thailand no longer has extensive tracts of wilderness, and any measure of restricting access to these remaining areas of natural beauty could be perceived as a draconian action on the part of the government. The way ahead is for careful forward planning for tourism in the parks. It is of the utmost importance that strategies for handling tourism are developed before the influx occurs. The unmanaged tourism to the hill-tribes demonstrates the dangers of a *laissez-faire* attitude. The future protection and environmental integrity of Northern Thailand may well depend on a sustainable approach to developing the tourism industry.

This study explores and addresses some of the theoretical issues described in this chapter. The essential issues on which the study is built and for which ecotourism development is likely influenced are summarized as follows:

- Exploration of visitor typologies and shifting trends in tourist demands and activities have been described (Plog 1991, Dearden and Harron 1994). In addition, Butler's model (Figure 2.3) theorizes on the changes in tourism destinations in relation to time and visitation (Butler 1980). These concepts are explored through an examination of tourist behaviour and perceptions with respect to activities and the sustainability of the industry.
- Ecotourism, when managed to follow the ethical guidelines established for the industry (section 2.2), could reduce the significance of the Dependency Theory for Thailand on a national and regional level. This study examines the opinions of research participants with respect to ecotourism and the prospects for its success, with the argument that the Dependency Theory need not always apply to international tourism.
- People's desire to connect with nature is described as biophilia (Chapman 1998, Wilson 1984). This study examines the applicability of the biophilia hypothesis for

visitors to Thailand's natural places, and if any cultural variance or convergence is apparent between the Thai people and foreign visitors. In addition, biophilia may have a strong influence on the satisfaction of visitors to natural sites and an inherent need for contact with wildlife may be evident in peoples' motives to visit. These issues are addressed by exploring visitor motives, interests and satisfactions.

- An exploration of local and foreign perceptions of ecotourism potentials and attractions is an important component of this study. Aside from the possible discovery of new sites of potential tourism interest, or previously unrecognized wildlife attributes, it is expected that the role of Buddhism in conjunction with nature and tourism has gone largely unrecognized. Previously these significant Thai values have been recognized in academic disciplines (Bänziger 1992, Bänziger 1988), and this study will examine its current role and perceived value as part of the issue of parochialism. Ecotourism planning may be hindered if the issue of parochialism is not addressed (Butler pers. comm., Miller 1995).
- Innovation Theory (Rogers 1983) may have significant implications at the local level for the success of adoption of an innovation (Dolsen 1986). The innovation in this case is ecotourism. This study will seek to address if the theory is applicable in Northern Thailand, and in what capacity.

Figure 2.6 represents and summarizes the theoretical implications considered above. Changing demands and tourist typologies may demonstrate a need for an ecotourism concept. Establishing an ecotourism concept may be hindered by the biophilia, parochialism and dependency theories. The outcomes of these influences may result in the failure or success of the development of the concept. Innovation Theory follows the success, and the ecotourism innovation is either rejected or adopted. If adopted then it gives rise to applied ecotourism. Once established, the sustainability of the industry is tested. If it proves to be unsustainable, then applied ecotourism has failed. If it is successful, then it may lead to the adoption of more applied ecotourism.

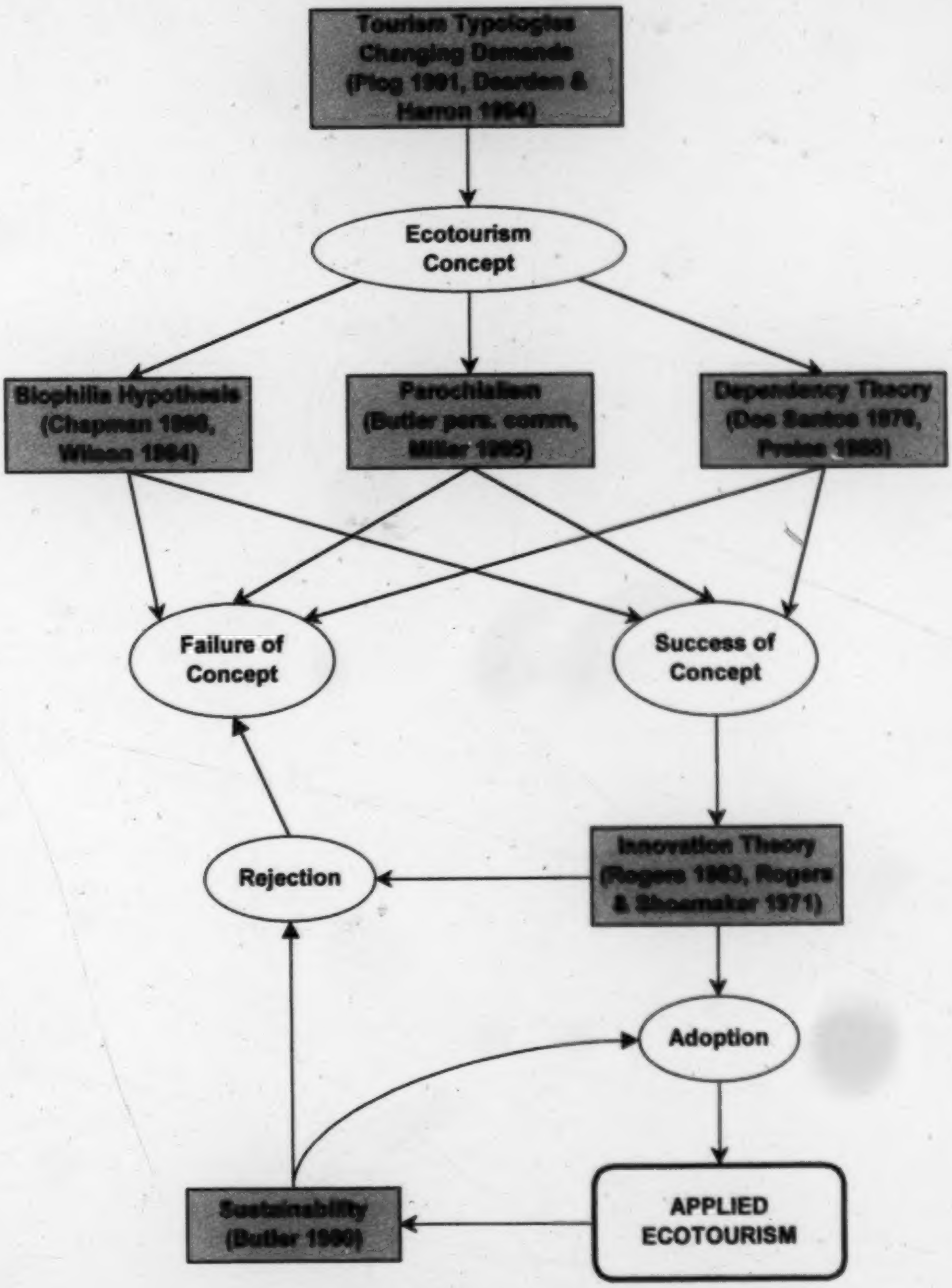
Tourism Typologies
Changing Demands
(Plog 1991, Dearden & Harron 1994)
Ecotourism Concept
Biophilia Hypothesis (Chapman 1986, Wilson 1984)
Parochialism (Butler pers. comm, Miller 1995)
Dependency Theory (Dos Santos 1970, Preiss 1980)
Failure of Concept
Success of Concept
Innovation Theory (Rogers 1983, Rogers & Shoemaker 1971)
Rejection
Adoption
APPLIED ECOTOURISM
Sustainability (Butler 1990)

Figure 2.6: The study's theoretical framework for the development of applied ecotourism, where "applied" implies a working model of ecotourism.

Chapter 3
Methods

This chapter describes the methods of data collection, the field sites where the various data were collected, a synopsis of research participants and a treatment of the data for analysis.

3.1 A qualitative and quantitative approach

The study has a strong focus on qualitative methods, and is a descriptive case study of ecotourism in Northern Thailand, based on a variety of methods. A qualitative approach was favoured in light of the cross-cultural component of the research. For cross-cultural studies Berno (1996) recommends qualitative methods. This study was intentionally designed to explore the perspectives of both Thai and foreign visitors, thus presenting the possibility that many different cultural perspectives would be explored.

The need to fully understand people's answers through exploratory questioning is possible using qualitative techniques, and these techniques are an important approach for trying to understand foreign perspectives. The research is augmented by quantitative data collection. A combination of these methods (triangulation) allows for better understanding of the overall picture. These methods were chosen as the best approach for seeking data and information that pertain to the objectives and goals of this study. An exclusively quantitative study would yield data, but this data would lack the richness gained from qualitative techniques (Ellis pers. comm.). This richness explores to a greater depth the personal experiences and perspectives of respondents. Colton (1998) describes the respondent's role as becoming one of co-researcher. The co-researcher begins to explore their own perspectives and seeks to understand them through open-ended questioning, whereas in quantitative research this is seldom the case.

This study incorporates both qualitative and quantitative approaches, with an emphasis on the former. However, thoroughness in both qualitative and quantitative methods and philosophies can be problematic, giving rise to some incompatibilities (Bogdan and Biklen 1992). Fusion of quantitative and qualitative methods has its critics at this level (Merriam 1988), but the addition of a quantitative component helps in validity and verification. This is a form of triangulation, and the quantitative data in this study serve as descriptive data where they are not treated using "thorough" quantitative techniques such as comparative statistical analyses. Triangulation, or convergent validity, is a process of reaffirming one view with another to come up with an overall picture, separate pieces of evidence supporting each other (McCutcheon 1981). It is a technique that assures reliability, because qualitative research has been criticized for its lack of rigour (Lincoln and Guba 1985).

Another method of avoiding incorrect outcomes is to feed responses and interpretations back to site informants for their corrective responses (Miles and Huberman 1984), thereby correcting initial responses. Member checks ensure continuous testing as the information and responses are gathered (Guba 1981), and in this case were conducted immediately on site to clarify responses. In an ideal study, it would be my intention to discuss the findings of this study as they emerge with research participants as a way of conducting member checks. Given the difficulties of returning to Thailand for further research, feedback on the thesis is welcomed from all parties to which it is made available. The information herein will be distributed to as many of the research participants as possible, and correspondence is expected and welcome by letter or email.

Part of this study incorporates case study research. Case study research requires different methods such as questionnaires, interviews and documentary analyses (Guba 1981). Consequently many different sources of data were identified and sought. Case study research is a form of descriptive, non-experimental research and is particularly useful in applied fields (Merriam 1988).

This study presents the opportunity of examining the above methods with respect to the difficulties of conducting research in a foreign country and with many different nationalities. To concentrate on only one nationality would defeat the objectives of this study, given that the TAT seeks to manage ecotourism for the benefit of both national and foreign tourists.

Further, the thesis and the research involved are a broad overview of ecotourism issues. This is a result of the wide interest expressed in this study, and its implications and input as a framework for initial policy and management of ecotourism in Northern Thailand, and for the curriculum development in Maejo University.

3.2 Data collection methods

The primary tool used in the data collection was a standardized, open-ended survey instrument (Appendix A), employed as outlined by Patton (1987). This permitted precise questioning, while allowing for further exploration when appropriate. Use of this method following a strict schedule is preferred, as it allows for comparative analysis of the respondent's answers, while providing in-depth information. At no time was the respondent presented with the instrument to complete, so the survey was administered verbally in the manner of an interview. These "interviews" were conducted in a manner to encourage people to feel at ease, in the environment appropriate to the nature of the subject under discussion (a park, natural site, etc.) (Bogdan and Biklen 1992).

Emphasis on the design of the survey instrument was both quantitative and qualitative because of the need for flexibility while conducting the survey in order to probe more deeply into perceptional issues. The survey was aimed at visitors, both national and foreign, to various natural sites, and was designed to last less than thirty minutes. Some questions were developed from similar studies conducted in Canada by Chapman (1998) and Miller (1995). Many questions were designed with a five-point Likert-type scale response system, and then respondents were asked to explain their answer.

Sampling for the survey was non-random, purposive sampling (a selected sample). This method is part of case study research (Merriam 1988). Sampling is not intended to be representative of visitors generally, but selected for what is relevant to the goals and objectives of the research (Guba 1981). Thus survey statistics are not indicative of park visitation overall, as the opinion of the foreigners was eagerly sought, their presence being very small compared to Thai visitor numbers. With a huge emphasis of the TAT on attracting foreign ecotourists, a representative sample through random selection would not have produced enough foreign respondents (less than 5%) to allow for realistic interpretations of the findings.

A Thai version of the survey instrument was prepared (Appendix B), and conducted in Thai by interpreters. They relayed the information in English for immediate record, and to allow for more questions relating to the same issue after the preliminary response. Interviews were conducted in a similar fashion of exchange.

This open-ended survey instrument was shared with Chris Fisher, in order to minimize the interruptions imposed on visitors, and to facilitate data collection. Questions in Appendix A relate to Chris Fisher's research, and are not involved in the analysis for this study.

Additional tool for data collection included interviews, and these were conducted in a variety of ways depending on the circumstances. Interviews are a primary source for case study research (Merriam 1988), and were guided by some general questions, offering latitude for further investigation (Bogdan and Biklen 1992). Notes were taken during the course of the interview. Other interviews were very informal and anonymously performed, notes being written immediately after the discussion had taken place.

Participant observation, also a significant component of case study research, ranged from being a complete participant to a complete observer (Merriam 1988). Observations were made while visiting the selected sites, from noting people's behaviour to the management and facilities within the park. Participation also included two treks, and visits to many tour agencies.

3.3 Analysis

Data were coded by categories as discussed by Bogdan and Biklen (1992). This permits sorting of descriptive data into categories that facilitate the development of research outcomes. All responses and transcripts were broken down into key phrases that were then assigned a code. Coding also facilitated reference during analysis. A computer program was not used in light of the enormous diversity of topics being covered, the need to consider all responses and the diversity of sources used in data collection. Following coding, groups and subgroups of responses were assembled.

There are four intrinsic stages to the analysis. These are firstly: comprehending, or establishing if sufficient data has been gathered, which was done while in Thailand. Secondly, synthesizing, which is a process of merging data to describe typical patterns or trends performed once data have been coded into usable categories. Thirdly, theorizing and the development of theory, and lastly recontextualizing so that theory is applicable to other settings (Morse 1994).

Most analysis is undertaken by description and interpretation. Interpretation has outcomes that "explain or create generalizations, develop new concepts, elaborating existing concepts, provide insights, clarify complexity and develop theory" (Peshkin 1993:25). Insights can change behaviour, refine knowledge and identify problems (Peshkin 1993). In interpretation, hermeneutics is about creating meaning not just reporting on it, and meaning is brought into being while constantly being shaped and reshaped (Smith 1991). Analysis is "conceived as an *emergent* product of a process of gradual induction" (Lofland and Lofland 1984:181).

A second short-answer survey (Apppendix D) was analyzed using the Social and Political Sciences Statistical (SPSS) Package. The data were coded for input, then sorted using the SPSS in order to provide frequencies and descriptive data to enhance the case study research in Doi Inthanon National Park.

3.4 Field sites

Fieldwork was conducted throughout the four month period of September to December of 1996. Initial sites were selected following discussions with academic staff at Maejo University, as those staff were present to help initiate the study. The following were visited to conduct survey research, interviews and/or observations:

- National Parks:
  - Doi Inthanon
  - Doi Suthep-Pui
  - Doi Khuntan
  - Ob Luang
  - Namtok Mae Surin
  - Sri Lanna
  - Wiang Kosai
  - Jae Son
- Wildlife Sanctuaries:
  - Doi Chiang Dao
  - Lum Nam Pai
- Other sites:
  - Tham Lod Forest Park
  - A northern Forest Plantation (name withheld)
  - Queen Sirikit Botanical Gardens
  - Mae Sa Valley Orchid and Butterfly farms
  - Mae Sa Valley Snake Farm

Chiang Mai Zoo
Lampang Elephant Conservation Centre
Tham Pla and Tham Mae Lanna
Ban Pong Royal Project
Huay Nam Pong village in Mae Hong Son province

3.5 Data Sources

3.5.1 *Open-ended surveys*

Open-ended surveys were conducted at the following sites, specific location chosen by where visitors had to show a degree of effort to reach the site, or sufficient interest to see sites other than the main tourist attraction. This helped eliminate many of the general (mass) tourists. Sites were also selected for their popularity to ensure that data could be collected. The specific sites were:

- *Doi Inthanon National Park*

  The summit of Doi Inthanon receives an enormous number of visitors who wish to stand on Thailand's highest point. Sites such as this were avoided as much as possible, and preference was given to places where visitors had just come off a trail (Angkha Trail), or who appeared interested in the Visitor Centre area near the summit, and at the Birder's Visitor Centre;
- *Doi Suthep-Pui National Park*

  Most visitors go to the historic site of the temple (Wat Prathart Doi Suthep). A site at a lower elevation that required a rough road drive and short walk to a waterfall was chosen as the principal site for surveys;
- *Doi Khuntan National Park*

  Low visitation to the park was a problem, but surveys were conducted at the railway station leaving the park;
- *Ob Luang National Park*

  Visitors to the park were approached as they were leaving the key natural attraction that was the gorge;

- *Jae Son National Park*

  Surveys were conducted at the waterfall that required a short walk from the parking lot;
- *Tham Lod Forest Park in Lum Nam Pai Wildlife Sanctuary*

  The main attraction here was the guided tour through the cave. Visitors were approached as they were leaving the cave. Guests at Cave Lodge nearby were approached in the evening.

The majority (51%) of the 147 surveys was completed in Doi Inthanon National Park. This was a favoured location as a primary ecotourism destination in the north and one of the most visited parks, and came most highly recommended and recognized during the course of interviews and discussions. The remainder was divided among several sites, with 17% were conducted at Tham Lod, 16% were completed at the Monthatarn Falls in Doi Suthep-Pui National Park, 8% in Jae Son National Park and 7% in Ob Luang. Only 1% was done in Doi Khuntan in light of extremely low visitation.

3.5.2 *Interviews*

Interviews were conducted in many locations, and a diversity of interviewees was sought in order to obtain as many varied opinions as possible. Employees and managers of parks and other natural areas were targeted at many of the sites visited. Members of non-government organizations were targeted, as well as government representatives in the TAT. Academic staff and private representatives of the tourism industry also participated. Those interviews that were conducted with employees of particular sites were built around general questions to structure the interview and allow for comparison with other interviews or survey respondents. Notes on conversations held in Chiang Mai tour agencies with clients of the agency were written down after the event.

3.5.3 *Participant Observation*

Participant observation was a method used on a number of occasions, to varying degrees of involvement:

- Two treks were arranged with two different tour agencies in Chiang Mai, both of which knew my involvement as researcher;
- Tourist behaviours at selected sites were recorded, notably in Doi Inthanon, to ascertain interest and involvement with nature trails;
- 41 tour agencies were visited on the pretense of looking for an ecotour, and the details of the tour offered were recorded;
- Other observations extend from management issues to suitability of sites for ecotourism activities based on my involvement and interest in this tourism area.

3.5.4 *Secondary data sources*

Other sources included: a quick response survey for a wider scope analysis on perceptions of Doi Inthanon National Park as a local case study; attendance at a conference on Doi Suthep-Pui National Park; and brochures and promotional literature relating to tourism activities.

3.6 Research participants and survey respondents

3.6.1 *Survey participation*

In total 147 open-ended surveys were successfully completed while 3 others were discounted due to interference from friends or relatives listening to the discussion. The average time taken to complete the survey was 38 minutes (n=126, because time was not recorded for all interviews), with a maximum of 77 minutes and minimum of 17 minutes. There was concern for the time taken to administer the survey, so the number of rejections from visitors was also noted. The total number of Thais and foreign visitors asked to participate was 160 and 108 respectively with 62% of the Thais and 47% of foreigners agreeing to participate.

Anticipated reasons for not participating in the survey were that the visitor did not have enough time (25 minutes was asked for), or that they could not speak English or Thai. Of respondents declining 53% indicated that they did not have enough time. Only 1 respondent said that language would be a problem. Other reasons for refusing were that other people were waiting (16%) or that they had a full schedule (10%). Some (8%) did not offer a reason, while others stated that they were hungry (4%). Another reason came from an elderly Thai visitor who said that she was too old to have valid opinions and to be able to answer the questions, and a birdwatcher replied "I am a twitcher" (a British term for "lister"), indicating that seeing a new bird was far more important to him.

Of the surveys 96 were completed by Thais, while the remainder were completed by foreigners. Among the foreign visitors 13 nationalities were represented, most notably American, Australian, British and German. The ratio of male to female respondents was 2:1.

The level of education was high, with 51% studying for or holding a Bachelor degree and 15% studying for or holding a higher degree. Others had or were studying for diplomas (18%), had graduated from high school (12%) or had left before completing high school (3%).

Respondent ages showed a definite trend for the younger generations. All respondents but one were aged 50 or below with 46% aged from 21 to 30 years. No one under 16 was asked to participate.

3.6.2 *Interviews*

In total, 22 in-depth interviews were conducted, mostly with people who worked in national parks or similar locations. These included park rangers, public relations officers, assistant and senior managers. Academics were also interviewed, as were operators of tour companies based in the north. Many incidental and unplanned conversations were had or were overheard, from which notes were later written down, including clients of trekking agencies.

3.7 Ethical considerations

The research proposal and open-ended survey instrument met the requirements of the Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Home Economics Ethics Review Committee. This followed approval by the National Research Council of Thailand, whose regulations for foreigners conducting research in Thailand were adhered to, as were the guidelines set by the Faculty for conducting research involving human subjects.

The purpose for research was explained to the subjects, and the opportunity to withdraw at any time permitted. For the purposes of this study, survey respondents never disclosed names or very personal information, and the names of interviewees are withheld. Occasional reference is made to specific tour agencies that gave permission for their name to be used. All information is kept confidentially on file at the researcher's home. Two trekking agencies are specifically named in the text, but at their request certain information has been withheld.

Chapter 4

Perceptions about Ecotourism

Earlier work on Thai tourists showed that nearly 60% prefer to visit natural attractions to other attractions such as the cultural, archaeological and entertainments (Chudintra 1993). Such a large interest is possibly reflected in the increasing visitation that national parks receive. However, while more Thais and foreigners may be visiting national parks, knowledge about the environment and conservation among tourists is described as lacking among tourists who then don't understand or follow rules and regulations of the sites being visited (Chettamart and Emphandhu 1994).

In the past, understanding of the concepts of ecotourism has not matched the more widespread sustainable views. In a report by the Midas Agronomics Company (1993:48) the threat of uncontrolled tourism is highlighted, and the following problem stated:

> *"The term 'ecotourism' is poorly understood in Thailand and is generally taken to mean mass tourism to a natural site, entailing the provision of hard surface roads and other infrastructure in previously inaccessible wilderness areas with consequent disturbance and damage to habitats and wildlife."*

In Australia, Nielsen *et al* (1995) explored the understanding of ecotourism principles among tourists who were experiencing nature-based tours or staying in accommodations linked to nature-based activities. Nielsen concludes that the respondents had an increased awareness compared to previous studies, and that they were "developing firm ideas about the characteristics of ecotourism operations and activities which these operations should be engaging in if they desire to be classified as ecotourism providers" (Nielsen *et al* 1995:16).

This study attempts to determine people's level of understanding of the concepts of ecotourism, partly in order to gauge how effectively these concepts are being publicized in Thailand. The perceptions of both foreign and Thai visitors are explored. Knowledge and understanding of the term ecotourism and the perceived benefits and costs are examined, and the respondents asked to rate Northern Thailand's ecotourism potential and explain their response.

4.1 Understanding ecotourism

Each respondent was asked to give his or her own definition of ecotourism. Most people were able to offer an interpretation of the term despite the fact that in total 14 different nationalities were represented. Results were analyzed according to the number of key components they included based on the definition as described in Chapter 2. Frequencies for each defining characteristic are given in Table 4.1.

Ecotourism component	*Frequency %*	*Foreign, n*	*Thai, n*
In natural areas	54	33	21
Studying scenery, flora, fauna	16	9	15
And culture past/present	9	8	5
While conserving environment	82	37	83
And improving local welfare	3.5	4	1
Don't know or incorrect	2.5	2	2
Survey respondents	n=147	n=51	n=96

Table 4.1: Percentage frequency of components mentioned by respondents defining ecotourism; for comparison, total numbers for foreign and Thai respondents for each component are shown.

Most (82%) of respondents indicated that conserving the environment (natural and/or cultural) was part of the concept. However 35% of respondents could name only this one. This is greatly attributed to the Thai translation of ecotourism (*thongtiao cheung anurak*) which literally means "travel while conserving." Among the respondents naming *only* the environment, 80% were Thai. A minority (16%) of respondents (of which 10 were foreign and 13 Thai) cited three or more characteristics. These respondents were considered to have a good knowledge of ecotourism.

Only 5 respondents (3.5%) named the improvement of local welfare as a component of ecotourism (4 of which were foreign), and only 4 said they did not know or could not give an answer. One of these (a Thai) commented that Thais do not know what the word means.

A public relations officer from Ob Luang National Park was of the opinion that knowledge about the subject among tourists is poor, and that only 10% know about the concept. He indicated that while many tourists read about it, once they are travelling they are no longer ecotourists. He was critical of the whole concept, and that it is not 'Thai', and with Thailand "following America to the end" the Thai people are confused about the concept. (This criticism of the western influence was only raised once in all interviews.) He stressed that conservation should have its origins at the local level since when it is operated through government channels the locals do not want it.

The Director of a Nature Education Centre stressed that there have been different interpretations of ecotourism from the TAT and the Royal Forestry Department, but that the TAT were going in the right direction by stressing the need for local participation. However, the Director did highlight situations of promotion of ecotourism that had become detrimental to the environment, such as the over-promotion of Tirasu Waterfall in Tak province, such that tourists had inflicted unacceptable damage to the site. He appealed for greater attention to carrying capacity at such sites.

Awareness among local people is very variable. A successful ecotourism project is run at Tham Lod in Mae Hong Son province, where 70 local people (mostly women) share guiding through the cave. In the initial stages, participation of the locals was not 100%, but now they have control over management issues themselves, and the Director of the project believes this gives them much greater satisfaction. The success of the project is mirrored in the dramatic decrease in deforestation in the area (Spies pers. comm.). An ecotourism pilot project is being established in Ban Sob Haad in Doi Inthanon National Park. The people of this Karen village are desperately looking for alternative incomes so that they are less dependent on the forest resources, and is very interested in establishing ecotourism. The headman of the village welcomes the idea and understands the concepts. Without it he believes the future and welfare of his village is bleak (Boonyasaranai pers. comm.). In contrast to the knowledge that reportedly exists in this village, park management in Doi Inthanon believes that the locals generally do not know about ecotourism and fail to understand why it is that foreigners come to their villages. In Mae Hong Son, the headman of the village of Huai Nam Pong (which falls under the umbrella of a German development project headquartered in Ban Soppong, Pang Mapha District) is interested in the concept of ecotourism. But the knowledge base exists neither in the village nor in the Project to establish ecotourism ventures, even though the interest is there among both parties.

Discussions with staff at the TAT regional head office in Chiang Mai revealed a deep concern for educating everyone about the concepts of ecotourism, both foreign visitors and the domestic tourism market. Concern was also expressed about just how much park managers know about the subject. Education, starting from kindergarten, is seen as crucial by the TAT and academics. Many felt optimistic that there would be a long term shift and deeper appreciation of the environment and ecotourism as "Thais are beginning to learn about ecotourism". Moves to educate park visitors about ecotourism were apparent in Ob Luang National Park, where a new visitor centre had a large interpretive display devoted to the subject. Unfortunately the vast majority of Thai visitors reportedly have no interest or recognition of the role of the visitor centre, so the information is not getting to them.

4.2 Benefits and costs of ecotourism

From the survey there are four main groups of respondent opinion about the benefits or costs of ecotourism in Northern Thailand. First and by far the majority of respondents (82%) said that ecotourism will benefit Northern Thailand. Next are those that indicated that there would be benefits provided certain conditions were met or that while some elements benefit, it will come at a cost to others (12%). A few (4%) hoped it would benefit, were uncertain or had no idea. Lastly, only 2% said that it would not benefit. The reasons given for their primary response were compressed into the dominant categories listed in Table 4.2.

The most frequently cited beneficiary of ecotourism was nature and environmental protection. Interestingly, the generation of income for the local communities was mentioned many times. While many did not define this as a requirement of ecotourism (section 4.1), 19% named this as a significant spin-off from ecotourism. Economic spin-offs were readily identified, with indirect consequences such as providing local people with more of an incentive to stay in their village, rather than

Primary response	*Category of Benefit*	**Occurrence**
Yes (82% of respondents)	Nature/Environment	85
	Local income	28
	Improved economy	12
	Tourist behaviour	8
	Cultural preservation	5
	Education and learning	5
	Thai reputation overseas	5
	Highlighting northern assets	5
	Model for other regions	2
	Locals "stay put"	2
	Sustainability	1
Yes, but/if (12% of respondents)	If it follows ethics, good management	7
	But not culture/environment	3
	If money ends up with locals	2
	If we can get rid of corruption	1
Hope/maybe/no idea (4% of respondents)	Hope so, got to believe dollars go to right place	3
	Hope so, are there solutions to the problems?	1
	Maybe more consciousness	1
No (2% of respondents)	Commercialization	1
	Government benefits only	1
	Society impacted by western ideals	1

Table 4.2: Categories or conditions of benefits according to benefit or cost of ecotourism to Northern Thailand.

leave for an often-exploited life in the city. The economic benefits extended to the national level as well.

Others felt that ecotourism would bring about better behaviour generally and could provide better opportunities for education and learning. A regional benefit would be that Northern Thailand could be recognized as a destination for excellent ecotourism, surpassing the rest of Thailand, as well as a model of excellence for the rest of the country. The whole country's reputation would benefit from northern-focused ecotourism. For others, benefits were seen as dependent on the tourists coming with an appropriate mindset or consciousness, and on the principles of ecotourism being upheld (while uncertainty was expressed as to the ability of those in the tourism industry to achieve this). Management was seen as a key issue, as was the elimination of corruption. Locals would have to benefit in some way while still preserving their culture.

Five respondents saw benefits with simultaneous costs. The economic benefit was recognized, but respondents thought that it would occur at a cost to the environment (through increased visitation in sensitive areas) or to the cultures (through increased incursion and exposure). The three respondents who saw no benefit from ecotourism gave reasons relating to the commercialization of nature, the government seizing the greatest rewards, and the introduction of undesirable western behaviour to local people. That only three people had a fully negative response to this question was surprising, given that there have been many criticisms of the industry.

Many of the same benefits were alluded to during the course of interviews. These included increased income for villagers, for example by guiding from which it is possible to earn up to 8000 Baht per month (approximately $CDN400 as of 1996/7). The province and town of Mae Hong Son was mentioned in particular as requiring ecotourism to maintain its culture, possibly seen as under threat. One tour guide operator believed in ecotourism to help provide an alternative income for the hilltribes who would otherwise extend their lands by clearing forest or resort to the illegal practice of growing opium. In his words, "ecotourism is the best thing that can happen to Northern Thailand – if you don't use (nature), what will happen to it?".

Additional benefits described included the economic benefit for parks that could then maybe set up or improve on their interpretive facilities. An influx of ecotourists could serve as a policing mechanism, changing other people's behaviours or bringing problems to attention. One interviewee believed one of the important benefits was for people to have natural areas in which they could relax, and that there would be benefits to the region in this capacity.

The problems discussed related to society, and the possible detrimental effects on local cultures, even to the point of exploitation of local women. One would hope that even the worst of ecotourists would have ethics enough not to be involved in this kind of practice. A tour operator highlighted some of the difficulties with respect to ecotourism behaviour, "if they don't have a head and a heart, forget it".

Problems relating to guiding practice were mentioned, and how many guides don't know what they are doing. As an example described by a tour operator, guides were seen taking a group out into a salt lick to show where elephants feed, thus scaring off wildlife for a considerable length of time. A further problem mentioned was carrying capacity, as already described with respect to Tirasu Waterfall in section 4.1.

The problems described relate to the failure to follow the ethical guidelines set out for ecotourism practices (Section 2.2), and emphasize the need to strictly adhere to such guidelines. An adherence to these guidelines has been lacking in the past, partly because of a possible lack of awareness among operators. One park ranger wished that ecotourism could have been set up thirty years ago so that there would have been more forest today. He went on to describe the difficulties in protecting a park, indicating that the "high level people are a problem, if they let people damage the park they know what will happen, but they get money – the potential depends on the person". Sadly the corruption to which this person and others alluded to was very apparent in some parks. One employee was specifically asked not to mention the problems, and only to say that everything was good in the park.

4.3 Rating Northern Thailand's ecotourism potential

From a Likert scale of 1 to 5, people rated the ecotourism potential in northern Thailand as being high to very high (see Table 4.3). The fifth point on the scale gave the opportunity for respondents to offer no opinion. Respondents were asked to expand on the reasoning for their answer. Anticipated responses were that high potential existed because of an abundance of nature and natural beauty. A breakdown of their responses however revealed a much more complex array of reasons. Broadly there were those who gave a positive rating or negative rating. Among those who rated the ecotourism potential as high or very high, it was particularly noticeable how many people set out conditions that have to be met in order for successful ecotourism to be developed.

Ecotourism potential rating	*n*	*%*
1- Very high	45	31
2- High	90	61
3- Low	10	7
4- Very low	1	0.5
5- No opinion	1	0.5
(Average 1.79, n=146)		

Table 4.3: Rating for ecotourism potential from Likert scale responses.

The positive outlook

Analysis of comments from those who thought that the ecotourism potential was high or very high showed that most comments related to the abundance and beauty of nature and forests, as well as some who identified with the wealth of culture that exists in the region. These comments were compressed into 10 categories (see Table 4.4). However, many people also indicated the positive roles that the government and people have in Thailand. A large emphasis was placed on the improved education and environmental awareness, leading to a change in people's understanding of the issues, as well as a general change in the behaviour of mass tourists by existing good example. There was also recognition for the role that tourism can have in protecting natural sites, and that if tourism does not conserve nature then the nature will face certain destruction.

Positive current factors	*Occurrence*
Nature, natural beauty, and its regional uniqueness	51
Changed attitudes and awareness of people	16
Promotion by government or agencies	12
Good education about ecotourism and conservation	10
Favourable destination (cheap, friendly, infrastructure, few tourists)	7
Conservation activities	6
Cultural diversity	6
Foreign ecotourists set good example	3
Increased prosperity makes it possible	2
It's the fashion	1

Table 4.4: Existing positive factors that support a high or very high ecotourism potential.

As well as describing existing factors, many respondents set conditions that had to be met in order for ecotourism to be a success. These conditional components are listed in Table 4.5.

Many of the listed factors are interconnected. Key factors voiced were the need for more and improved education to increase conservation awareness. Hope was expressed in the younger generations, but there was uncertainty in being able to change the habits of the older generations. The need for tourists to be educated was also stressed. Such increased awareness would facilitate the establishment of practical and appropriate policy for ecotourism development.

Condition to be met	Occurrence
More education, change people's attitudes (for young, old, tourists)	16
Regulation, policy, control	10
Cooperation and organizational support	3
More ecotourism related information	3
Minimize government corruption	2
Local involvement, benefits	2
Improved local politics, link between government and people	2
Appropriate infrastructure development	2
Correct tour operators, good guides	2
Improved promotion	1
Increased government funding	1
Environmental rehabilitation	1

Table 4.5: Conditional factors to be met for ecotourism potential to be high or very high.

Several comments related to political issues. While "Thais are beginning to think about nature, conservation may suffer because of government officials exploiting (the environment)". Further to the elimination of corruption is the need for increased cooperation. This stretches from high end to low end government, through NGOs, local people and tour agencies. One tour operator was very critical of the vast amount of NGO activity in the region with little interaction going on between groups, and in their failure to establish long-term goals for the period beyond the projects' operations.

Conditions for the establishment of ecotourism were also raised during interviews. While considering the potential to be high, notable conditions that were addressed related to education and the changing of people's habits. Foreign tourists were considered to be better behaved than the Thai visitors who never respect the rules. Unfortunately "it will take a long time to change the way people think". Education issues extended to promotion. While there is "enough promotion already, it would be better to promote how to travel in natural areas, rather than new places".

One academic considered the potential to be "really huge", provided that the right people could be found to staff it (the need for well-trained staff was frequently mentioned in other interviews). He compared it potentially to be as good and successful as Australia. Others identified with the enormous resource base in the north, beyond the national parks. Wildlife sanctuaries could have strictly controlled ecotourism, but only when the sanctuaries (wildlife populations) are ready to handle visitation. This management issue is linked to government policy on land use, and ecotourism potential was seen as entirely dependent on the government's activities. Potential was seen to be improving in light of the current activities by the government and agencies with respect to conferences and the sharing of information. Issues regarding communication went from government to local levels. Local people need carefully designed plans and education for managing ventures such as cooperatives. Their involvement in decision-making and management was seen as crucial to success. This has been neglected in the past, when locals have been told what to do with little or no cooperation or shared decision-making.

The underlying trend among interviewees for ecotourism and the future was one of optimism in light of the increasing awareness and improved education about the subject, but the need for the establishment of a central watchdog to enforce policy and regulation was identified. This central figure could ensure consistency and ethical responsibility among the many groups that would ultimately be involved in ecotourism ventures.

The negative outlook

While some respondents said that the potential was high or very high, some felt that treks were going in the wrong direction or that the region was already congested with tourists, and that any more would be either harmful to nature or to the local cultures. Some were very critical of the lack of respect shown to cultures. Their initial response was recorded as high potential, yet on clarification of their view, it was apparent that they did not want ecotourism to happen, for fear of what would result from the ensuing development.

Negative perceptions about the ecotourism potential related to existing tourist habits, such as the abundance of garbage, and excessive tourism already in the region. These would be exacerbated by an influx of tourists to previously inaccessible regions. Concerns about the separation of ecotourism from mass tourism were voiced, and that the concept of ecotourism is both idealistic and unlikely. Reference to the government's lack of support was made, and the critical dependency that the development of successful ecotourism requires of it. Potential was also considered low because of the lack of awareness of the concepts of ecotourism, as well as a general lack of care among the locals for what the westerners care about. In addition, the focus of money and benefits was said to undermine ecotourism's potential, as the benefits would seldom reach those who need them, or, as already seen with cultural tourism, the focus of making money among villagers could undermine the ultimate ecotourism product. Two remarks regarding the apparent lack of large wildlife were seen as negative factors in trying to succeed in regional ecotourism.

4.4 Discussion

Few people (16%) demonstrated a full and keen understanding of the concepts and goals of ecotourism. This was very much the expected outcome of the inquiry given the complexity of the academic interpretations of ecotourism. That 16% (some of whom were Thai respondents) showed a good understanding was an encouraging result since a better informed public about the virtues of ecotourism and conservation awareness can only help the cause of environmental protection. It was not expected that even one person would cite all the points in the definition, unless they were academically involved with the subject. The majority had very little understanding, and this highlights the frequently recognized need for increased public awareness, not only about ecotourism but also about conservation values in general. These outcomes differ from the results of Nielsen *et al* (1995) because in this study a lower level of understanding was evident. This was expected, given that the ecotourism industry in Australia is better established and that Australia has had a comprehensive National Ecotourism Strategy (Commonwealth Department of Tourism 1994) for several years. The development of a thorough strategy such as this ameliorates problems of awareness among tourists and operators. In 1992, Finucane and Dowling (1995) found that operators did not have a universal definition of ecotourism, but that a range of elements identified by survey respondents related to the enjoyment and appreciation of nature. A repeat study of operators would demonstrate whether the National Ecotourism Strategy has had an impact. The TAT recently released its own policies and guidelines for the development of ecotourism (TAT 1995-1996). It is recommended that the impacts of this document and the exact nature of its distribution are closely monitored to determine its success as a guideline for public and private interests in the ecotourism industry. Nielsen *et al* (1995) also concluded that there was strong support for an ecotourism accreditation scheme whereby operators that are dedicated to the principles of ecotourism are clearly identified. Such a scheme would lessen the concerns of some of the research participants in this study, and possibly lead to better management by operators who would desire to be a member of an accredited group. Presently there are some organizations for tourism operators in Thailand (Duangsri pers. comm.), none of which are governed by strict guidelines for membership. These organizations serve to bring companies running similar operations together as a club.

During the course of the interviews and surveys, participants gained an increased understanding of the concepts involved, and the overwhelming majority recognized the benefits that ecotourism could bring to the region. This highlights the value of qualitative research where the participants in the survey are learning as they explore their perceptions. Figure 4.1 is a conceptual model for the inputs and outcomes of ecotourism as described by participants in the research, provided that the ecotourism management follows the ethical guidelines established for the industry.

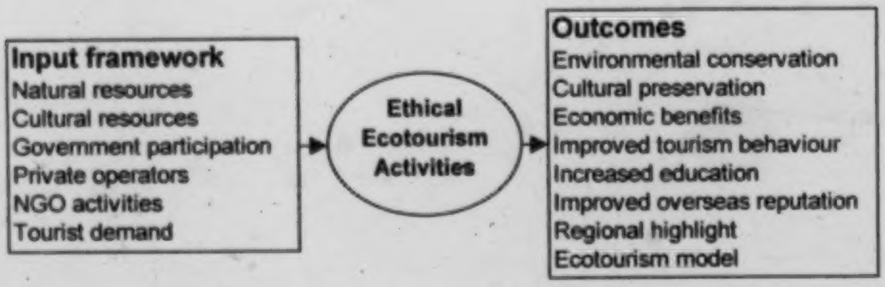
Input framework
Natural resources
Cultural resources
Government participation
Private operators
NGO activities
Tourist demand
Ethical Ecotourism Activities
Outcomes
Environmental conservation
Cultural preservation
Economic benefits
Improved tourism behaviour
Increased education
Improved overseas reputation
Regional highlight
Ecotourism model

Figure 4.1: Respondents' perceived inputs and outcomes from ethical ecotourism activities.

Many of the issues raised in discussing the potential for ecotourism were related to components of Figure 4.1 outlining the inputs and outcomes. Participants went into more detail about the inputs that currently exist in supporting the establishment of ecotourism for the near future. These are represented in the model shown in Figure 4.2.

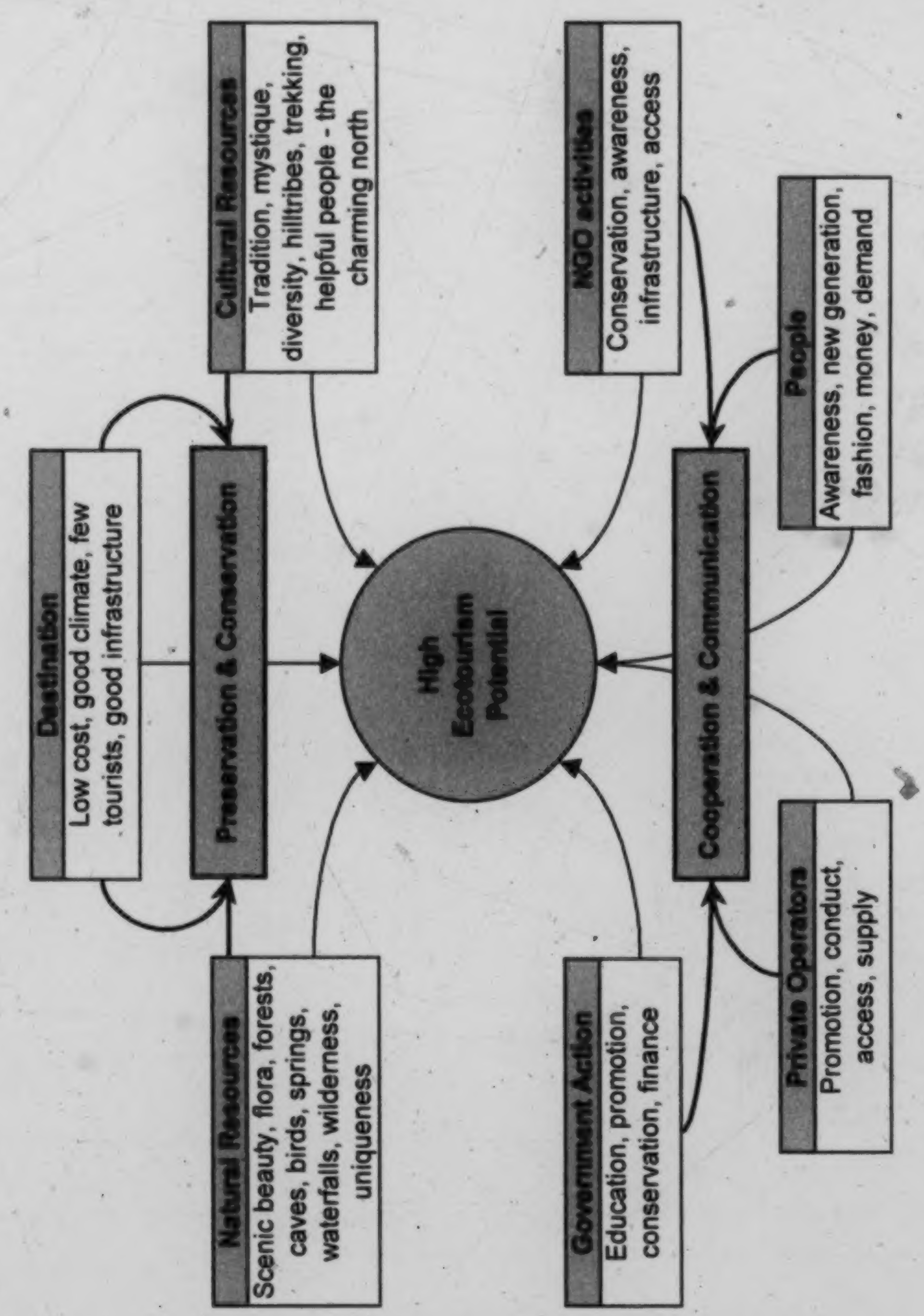
Natural Resources
Scenic beauty, flora, forests, caves, birds, springs, waterfalls, wilderness, uniqueness
Destination
Low cost, good climate, few tourists, good infrastructure
Cultural Resources
Tradition, mystique, diversity, hilltribes, trekking, helpful people - the charming north
Preservation & Conservation
High Ecotourism Potential
Government Action
Education, promotion, conservation, finance
Cooperation & Communication
NGO activities
Conservation, awareness, infrastructure, access
Private Operators
Promotion, conduct, access, supply
People
Awareness, new generation, fashion, money, demand

Figure 4.2: Perceptional model for existing factors supporting a high ecotourism potential and its development, based on respondent's comments.

There are two main groupings, the attractions (natural resources, cultural resources and the destination) and the stakeholders (government, private operators, people and non-government organizations). With the continued conservation and preservation of the attractions, and continued cooperation amongst stakeholder groups, there exists a high ecotourism potential.

Many respondents also set conditions or requirements that must be met over and above the existing favourable qualities. In analyzing these many factors, there appeared to be a number of interconnected peripheral components that give rise to a key set of core components that would help ensure successful ecotourism operations. These are represented in Figure 4.3. Around the outside of the model are minor conditions described by respondents. These are components that were recognized as requiring more attention in order for ecotourism to become more possible. Where development is described, this refers not necessarily to the need for more development, but for appropriate development. Once all these minor conditions are appropriately considered, the core conditions must also be met, and these include increased conservation of the attractions, increased and improved cooperation amongst the stakeholders, and notably, improved benefits to the local people.

On an individual level, participants did not have a full, clear picture of the complex issues surrounding ecotourism as compared to the working definition described in section 2.2. As a collective, however, respondents and interviewees developed a clear yet complex picture of ecotourism in its meaning and in the issues that are involved in ecotourism management. Optimism of the participants in the research for this study dominated. The suggestion that tourism development follows only one path of development, as suggested by dependency theorists (Pearce 1992), may not apply. With the strict governance of ethical ecotourism (as described by research participants), the theory becomes invalid. Zurick (1992) also suggests that the Dependency Theory is less appropriate for alternative tourism development. Ecotourism, when following the ethics outlined in section 2.2, ensures that local management and involvement is included in the activity, and that revenue from the activity remains at or in the vicinity of the ecotourism destination, to the benefit of those local residents.

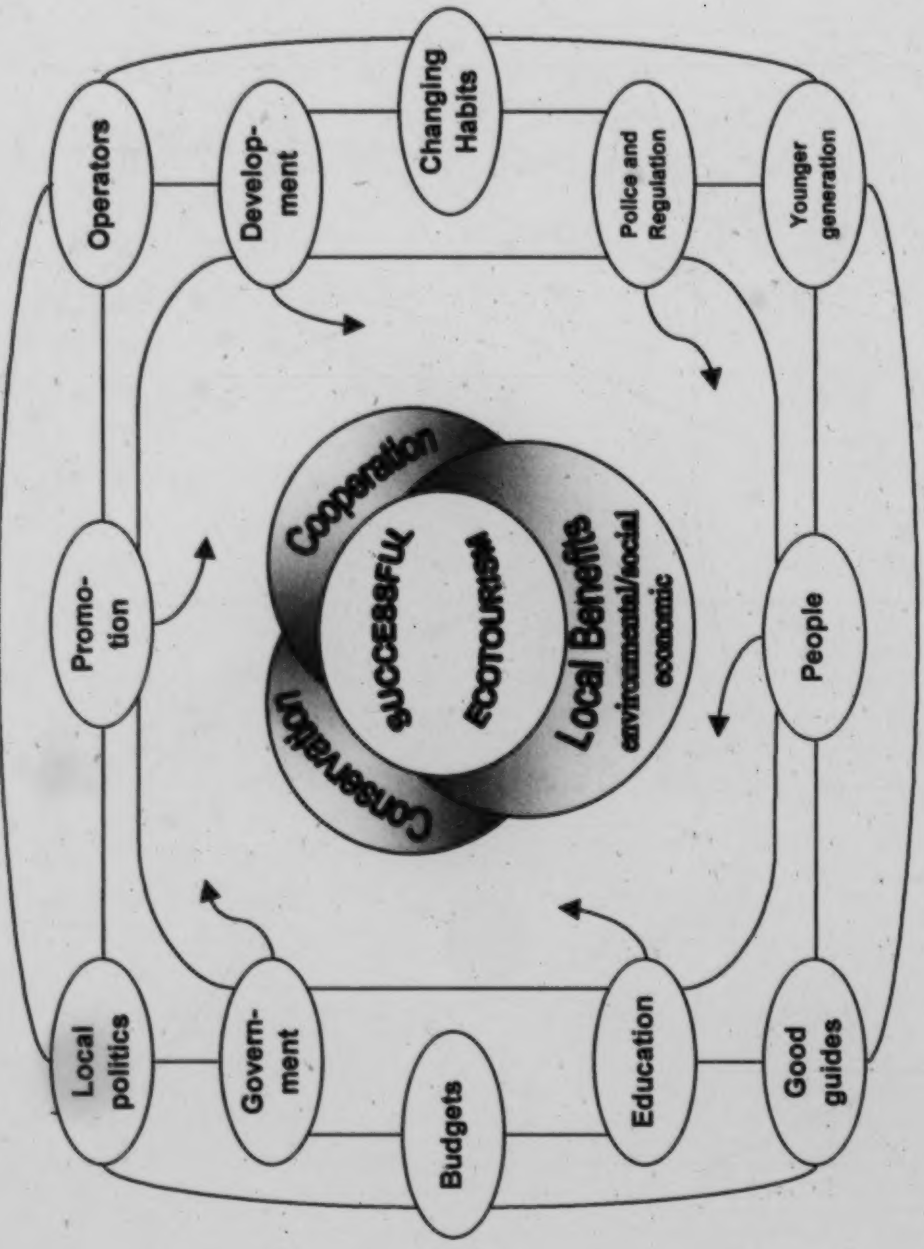
Operators
Develop-ment
Changing Habits
Police and Regulation
Younger generation
Promo-tion
People
Local politics
Goverment
Budgets
Education
Good guides
Cooperation
SUCCESSFUL
ECOTOURISM
Local Benefits
environmental/social
economic
Conservation

Figure 4.3: Perceptional framework for factors and conditions that must be met for successful ecotourism, based on respondents' comments.

The negative perceptions stress that this kind of alternative tourism development can go in the wrong direction, and that ecotourism may not always be ethically managed. Northern Thailand's destinations could become victims of uncontrolled tourism, and similar trends exhibited by the major coastal tourism destinations of the south, in line with the outcomes of Dependency Theory, may become evident. This would include such problems as the loss of local control, and a failure for the local communities to derive benefits from ecotourism activities undertaken in their vicinity. However, Thailand has the potential to show that other routes of development are possible beyond the declines associated with the Dependency Theory and Butler's logistic curve (Figure 2.3).

The lack of awareness among research participants in all capacities has implications with respect to Innovation Theory. Awareness creates interest. Without that awareness there is no potential for interest, and difficulties in establishing an ecotourism activity arise. It is important to create awareness in ways that are appropriate to the individuals concerned. For example, at the local level, communication of the principles and need should be directed through the respected elder or headman of the village. As users, visitors or ecotourists will also benefit from an educational component on, for example, appropriate behaviour for both the environment and the local cultures.

Generation of awareness at the outset is an important step that should not be neglected. There is significant risk in imposing a change, such as by the introduction of ecotourism, on a community. Rogers and Shoemaker (1971) highlight some of the needs for appropriate channels to be employed in creating awareness. In this instance, the channels include clear information about the benefits of ecotourism, a collective (and not authoritarian) approach to decision-making, and appropriate communication channels (notably through the headman of a village). These relate to the issue of cooperation and communication in both of Figures 4.2 and 4.3.

Chapter 5

Motivations and Interests

Despite the large number of visitors to parks, few studies have been conducted to ascertain visitor motives and interests in coming to the parks. Chudintra (1993) indicates that surveys on Thai tourists showed that nearly 60% of them have a preference for natural attractions above others. This is possibly reflected in the dramatic increase in visitation in recent years. From 1976 to 1985 visitor numbers rose by 400 percent (Kasetsart University Faculty of Forestry 1987). Recent estimates for visits to natural areas by the domestic market are put at 10 million (Dowling 1996). Of the visits made to national parks, 95% are made by Thai residents (Gray *et al* 1994; Kasetsart University Faculty of Forestry 1987).

There is no doubt that parks and other natural areas are popular tourism destinations. However, the ecotourist element of all these visits is probably very small, since it is a minority tourism activity. Under the umbrella of ecotourism, the TAT has promoted various national parks such as Khao Yai National Park. The TAT was blamed for the mismanagement and deterioration of this park (Dhanasettakorn 1993) when it acquired a golf course and resort. Wildlife fatalities and disruption occurred as a result. Similarly, with a loss in its environmental integrity, the IUCN singled out Doi Inthanon National Park because of uncontrolled tourism development amongst other reasons (Gray *et al* 1994).

Other studies on visitors to natural areas have focused on opinions on park facilities. In these, satisfaction with wildlife viewing facilities and information was very low (NREP and HIID 1995, Elliott 1993). While this information demonstrates avenues that natural area management should consider in the future, it does not address the real needs of the people since the studies fail to consider the motives behind people's visits to natural areas and in their specific interests. There is considerable value in such information. Dearden and Harron (1994) have indicated that there has been a shift in the recreational experiences sought by trekking tourists to Northern Thailand, with an increased demand for nature-based activities. This study explores the motives of visitors to natural sites and may elucidate the tourist behaviour changes happening. In addition, Western and Henry (1979) write that visitors' stated preference, actual viewing behaviour, and flexibility in response to interpretive services need to be known in order to determine the carrying capacities and appropriate management practices in natural areas. Thailand in some respects has an advantage and an ideal opportunity to begin first class practices since most of the parks lack infrastructure and information for ecotourism activities. Before any development occurs the needs and concerns of the people need to be understood so that both development and policy are appropriate to the people, as well as to the ecological integrity of the natural area systems.

In the promotion of ecotourism Brockelman and Dearden (1990) caution that nature-trekking should be directed to special interest groups and not the general tourists. Duffus and Dearden (1990) differentiate wildlife tourists into generalists and specialists. Establishing visitor perceptions to natural areas may help to elucidate the specialist and generalist needs and interests. This can facilitate the establishment and marketing of nature-based activities. Brockelman and Dearden (1990) stress the need for a theme in marketing such activities, and themes can only be developed when the values of a region or site are identified, and the desires of visitors established. Historically, and in large parks such as Khao Yai, themes have oriented towards "charismatic megafauna", or large wildlife that has dramatic pulling power. In Northern Thailand, few of the natural areas retain any large wildlife, and those that do have such diminished populations that sightings are extremely rare. It is quite possible that many natural areas, while still boasting populations of large wildlife, have lost them altogether as a result of continued degradation of the ecological integrity of the region. Alternatives, therefore, need to be established, and it is possible that existing visitors may help indicate what those regional alternatives might be.

5.1 Motives

Visitors were asked why they had come to the site. Some offered only one reason, while others offered several. The frequency of each reason was recorded from all respondents (Table 5.1). From 147 respondents 205 reasons were given for coming to the site. The most frequently cited reason was to come to see nature and forests, and learn about them. Further consideration is given to this category in section 5.3. The scenic beauty of the site ranked second. Some responses were site specific to Doi Inthanon National Park summit region (15%), the visitors stating the highest point and the cool climate and fog as their motivation for visiting the park. Some respondents were brought by friends or were recommended to come. The relaxation and inspiration that a natural site can offer were significant for others.

Reason		***% occurrence***
see and learn about nature		26
scenic beauty		12
recommended or brought by friends or work		9
fresh air, get out of out of the city		7
for relaxation and inspiration		6.5
way of using vacation time		5
on route, a convenient stop		4
have to visit such "must see" locations		2.5
easy to access		2.5
to do some photography		2.5
survey trip for possible return visit		2.5
spiritual reasons		1.5
hiking and exercise		1.5
other reasons		2.5
site specific (DINP)	to be at the highest point	9
	to enjoy a different climate	6

Table 5.1: Visitors' stated reasons for visiting the natural site, as percentages of total responses.

Other reasons broadly fell into categories relating to using up vacation time and getting out of the city. Parks were considered to be refuges from the city, where one can breathe fresh air. Some remarked on the ease of access to the site as their reason, or that it was on route to another destination. Only 1.5% were there to hike or exercise. However, it is possible that those who had interests in nature and the forest might have been expecting to do some hiking but did not mention it as a specific motive. A "must see" destination of Thailand warranted a visit by a few respondents, and others were there specifically for the purpose of taking photographs.

5.2 Return Visitation

Visitors were asked if this was their first visit to the site, and if not, how many times they had previously been. Nearly two thirds (62%) of visitors were at the site for the first time, while 21% had been more than once but less than 5 times. The remainder had visited from 5 to 100+ times. Monthatarn Falls had the highest return visits, including one person who had been there 100+ times. Doi Inthanon also had high rates of return, one had been more than 20 times, and 4 more than 10 times. Respondents were also asked if they would come back again. An overwhelming 96% of Thais said that they would like to return to the site. Among the foreign respondents 53% said that they would like to return, while 33% did not want to and the rest were unsure. When asked why they would or would not like to come back a number of different reasons were given (see Table 5.2). Some people had more than one reason why they would come back. Thais answered the question with a more site-specific orientation, while foreigners had a regional perspective.

Reason to return	***Occurrence %***
bring others back	18
for nature and forests	13
for the climate	12
see more of the site next time	10
for birdwatching	7
for escape and relaxation	6
for the local scenery	5
because it is close and convenient	4
to spend more time next time	3.5
to use the trails	3
for the people and hilltribes	2
to see it in a different season	1.5
for the clean air	1
Reasons not to return	
too many other places to see	9
seen it all	1.5
too many tourists	1
bad service and infrastructure	1.5
too easy to access	1

Table 5.2: Reasons cited for wanting and not wanting to return to the natural site or region.

The most frequently stated reason (see Table 5.2) for returning was that they would like to come back to share the place with other friends or family. Fewer said that they would come back for the nature and forests; the existence of trees was frequently mentioned as an important factor and inspiration. Some found the climate to be very favourable while others said that there was so much more to see here and that a longer time was needed. There were several birders wanting to see more birds. Others wanted to come back to escape from the city and relax, to enjoy the beautiful scenery, and make use of the trails. Changes in the seasons were also mentioned, and only 2% were interested in the people or hilltribes.

For 68% of those who did not want to return or who were unsure, there were many other places to see (outside of Thailand). Other reasons were more critical in nature, including that the infrastructure was too bad, or that access to nature sites was too easy, and that there were too many tourists. Of the 27 respondents not interested in returning only 4 were Thai.

Particular attention was paid to those who had visited many times and who expressed an interest in returning again. A foreign resident of Chiang Mai came to Monthatarn Falls every week, and estimated he had visited the falls more than 100 times. He saw the falls as a source for re-energizing his spirit from the power of nature present at the falls. Another visitor to the falls had been more than 20 times because it was so easy to access and close to the city. A visitor to Doi Inthanon had been more than 20 times for birding, and was interested in returning at different times of the year to see the seasonal changes. Another birdwatcher had been more than 10 times. Doi Inthanon was also a retreat from the city for one 10+ times visitor, and a favourite for another who enjoyed the different climate at higher altitudes. Jae Son had two 10+ visitors, one who found the site to be convenient to access and very relaxing, and another who wanted to photograph the wildflowers around New Year time. Tham Lod had one local visitor who had been more than 10 times with different friends who were visiting.

5.3 Nature-based Interests

While many people alluded to their interests as reasons for being there, this subject was addressed as a separate question. Visitors were asked how important certain factors were during their travels in Northern Thailand. If the category was rated very highly, respondents were asked to describe just what was so important for them. The average rating for natural beauty was 1.21 (n=146) on the Likert scale of 1-4. Only 1% had no opinion or it was not important to them. A respondent's interpretation of what constituted natural beauty or geological attractions was very variable and showed considerable overlap. This was further complicated by the Thai translation for geological attraction with its broader scope than the English meaning. Geological attractions had a slightly lower average rating at 1.72 (n=143).

Occurrence of key words from their descriptions was recorded, and in light of commonalities between the two categories of natural beauty, combined to give an impression of what features were more important to the respondents. Ranking highest in importance were the forests and mountains of the region. Forests comprised 21% of the comments, as did mountains. Waterfalls ranked high with 16% and caves with 8%. Climate was a considerable factor for 6%. For 5% the pristine, or untouched, quality of the environment was an essential component of their nature experience. The remaining 23% was comprised of a host of different variables from insects to scenic views (see table 5.3).

At a more specific level respondents were asked to describe how important flowers were to them. This rated at an average of 1.73 (n=144) on a Likert scale of 1-4. Only 3 did not have an opinion. When those who rated their interest as very high (n=61) were asked which flowers they liked, orchids were mentioned by 44% (5% specifically mentioning the ladyslippers) and 23% mentioned the rhododendron found in Doi Inthanon. The summit of Doi Inthanon is famous for the "thousand year rose" (a rhododendron) found on the Angkha nature trail and is the focal point for many visitors. Many were interested only in this flower. The sunflower of Mae Hong Son province was mentioned by 8%. There were many other types mentioned only once as specific favourites (Table 5.4).

It is apparent from the list that introduced species are mentioned. One of the major attractions to the province of Mae Hong Son is the sunflower, an introduced species from southern North America. The Poinsettia and Hydrangea are also introduced. While the foreign enthusiasts are driven largely by local flora and fauna, the Thai tourists appear to be interested more in beauty. A popular pastime is to take

Natural Component	*Occurrence (%)*
Forests	21
Mountains	21
Waterfalls	16
Caves	8
Climate	6
Pristine environments	5
Scenic views	4
Flowers	3
Gorges	3
Interesting topography	2
No people	1.5
Rock forms	1,5
Birds	1
Fog	1
Summit	<1
Peace	<1
Wildlife	<1
People	<0.5
Insects	<0.5
Trails	<0.5
Unusual things	<0.5

Table 5.3: Incidence of key words mentioned as of interest for natural beauty and geological attractions, from 262 recorded comments.

Flower type	*Occurrence %*
All	10
Orchids	44
Rhododendron	23
Sunflower	8
Poinsettia	3
Golden Lotus, Talo Tree, Hydrangea, Bamboo, Grasses, Roses, Ferns, Mushrooms	1.5 for each type

Table 5.4: Key flower types mentioned by respondents who expressed a very high interest in flowers.

photos of people in front of flowerbeds. At the summit of Doi Inthanon, particular attention was paid to the large flower heads of the Hydrangea planted near the visitor centre, which were then used as a backdrop for photographs. A very high or high interest in flowers could well be out of a desire to see pretty flowers, rather than with an interest in learning about them. The Rhododendron may well be a "victim" of this enthusiasm, since the showy flower heads are large and red. However, orchids were mentioned on many occasions, possibly hinting at a deeper appreciation of the flora.

The same approach was used to determine the level of interest in birds. Birds rated at an average of 1.98 on a Likert scale of 1-4 among the 141 who responded. Many (23) different species or groups (eg woodpeckers, kingfishers) were named as specifically interesting (Table 5.5). The green-tailed sunbird was mentioned by 22% of the respondents who rated a very high interest in birds, and hornbills were mentioned by 17%. No other bird was mentioned more than twice, but some respondents did list more than one bird of interest. The sunbird is endemic to Doi Inthanon and hornbills are for the most part indicators of healthy unfragmented forest. Unfortunately in Northern Thailand most of the hornbills have been extirpated, and sightings of those that remain are a rare privilege.

Four respondents said there was no information about birds. Two foreigners commented on the Thais killing many birds for food, and one wished that there were more birds to be seen. As another respondent put it, when there is no forest, there are no birds. For one person the sound and song of birds alone was enough to make him feel satisfied and happy.

Bird species or group		*Occurrence %*
Green-tailed sunbird		22
Hornbill		17
Minivets		5
Kingfishes		5
Pheasants		5
Wagtails		5
Chestnut-tailed minla, Sirinthon swallow, Parrots, Barbets, Koel, Bee-eaters, Red-winged bulbul, Forktails, Parrotbills, Yellow-cheeked tits, Green Cochoa, Cutia, Magpies, Nuthatch, Racquet-tailed drongo, Flycatchers, Woodpeckers		2.5 each
Bird phenomena:	migration	2.5
	song	2.5

Table 5.5: Key bird groups or species mentioned by respondents who expressed a very high interest in birds.

Wildlife type	*Occurrence %*
elephant	48
tiger	26
primates	19
reptiles	19
insects	19
deer	14
amphibians	12
rabbits	10
rhino	7
water buffalo	7
squirrels	7
banteng	5
bears	5
all wildlife	5
any endangered species	5
fish	2.5
sloth	2.5
couprey	2.5
fox	2.5

Table 5.6: Key animal groups or species mentioned by respondents who expressed a very high interest in other wildlife.

Other wildlife had an average rating of 1.91 (n=139) on a Likert scale of 1-4. Analysis of comments showed that the larger animals dominated among those who expressed a very high interest in other wildlife (n=42). Most notably the elephant was mentioned 20 times, then the tiger with 11 records. Unexpectedly, insects had 8 records (some of which were for the butterflies), as did reptiles and primates. Other respondents had more specific and less frequently encountered favourites (see table 5.6). Many respondents had more than one animal they wanted to mention.

Eight respondents commented on the apparent lack of animals in the region and that they had failed to see any. There were comments that implied that some respondents thought that there was more large wildlife to be seen in other regions of the country.

General wildlife viewing rated 2.06 (n=139). Once again, some respondents (6) commented on the lack of wildlife to view in the region, or that it was better in other regions of the country. One person complained about the lack of opportunity to do it, in terms of facilities. Interestingly 7 people commented on the importance of not disturbing wildlife, even though they may enjoy the activity. Requests for night watching in the region were made by 4 respondents. Hides and wilderness camping were requested by 2 respondents.

5.4 Cultural Interests

When asked to rate the importance of cultural or sacred attractions, most people indicated that it was a very important factor for their visit to the region. The average rating on a four point Likert scale was 1.69 (n=142). This puts the importance on a close level to flowers, but not as important as natural beauty. Respondents were then asked about specific components of cultural and sacred sites or attractions, to establish what exactly was of interest to them.

Meeting local people proved to be the most important factor (1.76, n=137). This was more highly favoured than hilltribes (2.05, n=137). Those who wished to comment on hilltribes had negative remarks, while no positive remarks were made. 13% of the respondents had negative views about hilltribe tourism, even when hilltribes were considered to be an important part of their visit. One respondent had been on a trek once, and said "never again" and another simply said "I hate treks". Four commented on the zoo-like quality of the experience, and were concerned for its intrusion on the hilltribe, making the participant feel uncomfortable. Eight added that they were not interested in disturbing another culture, and four said that the hilltribes had already changed too much (or were still changing) to be of interest to them. One respondent commented on the villagers' need for ecotourism operations and another was concerned about the mass tourism approach and how it would affect the hilltribes.

Temples, cuisine, festivals, archaeological attractions and the arts and drama all rated between 1.91 and 2.05, while shopping (for souvenirs) was the least important rating at 2.74. Interestingly, questions regarding shopping evoked the strongest reaction of joy or despair.

5.5 Enjoyment

To further ascertain people's interests and possible motives for visiting a site, each participant was asked what he or she had most enjoyed. Most respondents had more than one thing they enjoyed, and only one said that there was nothing enjoyable, while 3

Enjoyment variable	*Occurrence as % of all respondents (n=143)*
Climate	20
Forests	20
Scenery	20
Waterfalls	13
Birds	10
Nature in general	9
Caves	8
Spiritual sites	6
Peace and quiet	6
Trails	6
Flowers	4
Non-tourist site	4
Rafting in cave	3.5
Guides	2
Cultural exposure	0.5
Butterflies	0.5
Hotspring	0.5
Friendly service	0.5

Table 5.7: Key words expressed when respondents described what they had enjoyed most at the site.

declined to comment as they felt that they had not yet seen enough. Analysis of comments mirrors the results in section 5.3 for nature-based interests. Most comments related to the climate (which is very different on the summit of Doi Inthanon), the presence and beauty of forests, and the natural scenery. Some respondents were more specific about what they enjoyed in natural beauty (see table 5.7).

Of considerable note is the lack of comments relating to the hilltribes or other local cultural components of a natural site, many of which have hilltribe villages as part of them. However, some of those who had used guides (at Tham Lod) found this (using a guide from the local village) to be the most enjoyable part of their experience. It was also interesting to note that quiet sites and sites not developed for tourists also added to the enjoyment for some.

One respondent said that it was the first time that they had seen many trees in Thailand, an observation that was shared by many Thai visitors from the south who saw the north as the last stronghold of forested land (Chapter 4). A respondent described the sense of comfort derived from being in nature, while another talked of the energy and power gained from nature. While some see it as a pretty place to spend some time, for others it clearly has stronger spiritual and personal implications.

When park staff were asked what visitors were interested in seeing or what they thought they most enjoyed about the park, the comments were not surprising. All the rangers described the most obvious tourist attraction at the site. If the site had a waterfall, then this was what people reportedly most enjoyed. At Ob Luang National Park, a public relations officer was of the opinion that 80% of the visitors did not want to know about wildlife and flowers.

5.6 Discussion

The majority of respondents have general interests relating to the natural attractions in the park. Most visitors came for natural beauty and scenic appreciation. The use of the national park or other natural site was for many a recreational day out, with few goals for learning and understanding the natural or other content of the park. However, one quarter of the visitors did express an interest in seeing and learning about nature, a figure that is realistic considering the power of attraction that say a waterfall or scenic view has for the average tourist.

In a similar way to the motives that brought people to the parks, their interests reflected generalist interests. Forests and landscape generally were dominant categories, and there were few specific interests mentioned that would be expected from special interest tourists. On further questioning of their interests, it became apparent that some respondents did harbour particular interest in some groups of wildlife. Orchids dominated the floral scene, while a wide range of birds was described as being of interest to some birding enthusiasts. Given the emphasis placed on forests, mountains and waterfalls, further exploration of the visitors' perceived values of these attractions would be an interesting avenue to further explore.

Many respondents showed a great appreciation and desire to see the large wildlife typical of Thai parks. The elephant and tiger are highly esteemed, but severely lacking in northern regions. Observations from visitors included the obvious lack of large wildlife in the north, and yet an abundance of forest. Despite the desire to see large wildlife, there was still a higher than expected interest in such groups as reptiles, amphibians and insects.

An overwhelming majority of visitors expressed an interest in returning, especially the Thai visitors. Most foreign visitors were enamoured with the region, and would return if there were not so many other places to see. This suggests that Northern Thailand can boast a wealth of natural heritage to which people are willing and wanting to return. One of the principal reasons for Thai visitors wanting to return was to share the park with friends and relatives who maybe had not been there before. Negative attitudes relating to return visits were almost non-existent.

Results from inquiring into visitor motives and interests at natural sites suggest a number of key factors that indicate some of Northern Thailand's highlights. Scenically variable and mountainous, and for the larger part forested, the region has the ability to draw visitors for its natural setting. Large expanses of forested or apparently untouched land are lacking in other regions of Thailand, and many remarks relate to this unique quality in the north. Impressive trees and extensive forests can act as a significant draw. However, one of the traditional draws to national parks, the large and watchable wildlife, is lacking in most parts of Northern Thailand. The parks still retain an ability to attract special interest groups beyond those who wish to watch large wildlife. Such interests cover birds, flowers (especially orchids), reptiles, amphibians and insects. Although these were mentioned by few respondents, it is expected that such interests would be the minority, as are ecotourists generally.

For many a significant component of their trip to the north was for cultural tourism, and many rated it as an important interest for them. However, during interviews, few people commented on this aspect, even though hilltribes are an important component of many national parks. Rather, people were much more willing to express their opinions on why they should not participate in activities. Recent trekking trends in Northern Thailand have suggested that attention has shifted away from seeking an intimate cultural experience to a diverse experience involving nature as well (Dearden and Harron 1994). Comments from participants who wished to voice an opinion on cultural tourism suggest that there is an awareness and sensitivity to the impacts of heavy and existing cultural tourism practices in Thailand. Even those that indicated that it is an important reason for them to come to Northern Thailand said that they would not participate in activities that would compromise the hosts or guests. Only those who had employed a local person as a guide spoke about the value of the experience for them.

Discussions held with three groups that were visiting a trekking agency in Chiang Mai revealed frustrations and anxiety about the whole industry. They each expressed relief at discovering one of the few agencies that could offer three or four day tours that were more true to ecotourism and the concept of sustainable tourism. Their interest lay beyond the imposing observations and intrusions of traditional tours, and a more nature-based experience was being sought. Discussions here and during interviews suggest that a shift in demand may be taking place, but as yet, the industry is not set up to support the wishes and needs of the tourists.

In the same way that the trekking industry is not set up to offer tours for people with an ecotourist mindset, the national parks are poorly set out to cater for their demands. Currently the majority of natural sites lack appropriate infrastructure for people interested in wildlife. Existing facilities largely relate to creating easy access for tourists to reach scenically splendid areas, at a cost to that area's integrity. Opinions about the existing management successes and problems are addressed in the next chapter.

Many of the research participants had a non-specific, or general enjoyment and appreciation of the sites they were visiting. The dominance among generalist appreciation for forests and nature suggests that the biophilia hypothesis holds true for visitors generally in this region. The enjoyment and bond to natural areas does not necessarily require the education and understanding of ecosystems and ecology, nor require knowledge of the names of birds. Visitors to natural areas were much more interested in describing their enjoyment of nature than culture. For many Thai people the existence of extensive forest tracts in the north was seen as a highlight of the country and a comfort. The phenomenon of biophilia is by no means confined to ecotourists with their passion for learning and intimacy with nature. The potential for large wildlife to attract tourists is undisputed, and many visitors noticed the absence of large animals from northern parks. However, despite this absence, the range of comments with respect to nature indicates that the biophilia hypothesis is by no means restricted to a person's desire to connect to large wildlife, but that all kinds of nature contribute to biophilia. As one Thai visitor commented, "the sounds and songs of birds alone are enough to make me feel satisfied and happy".

Further, the broad range of areas of interest help overcome obstacles related to the issue of parochialism. Key areas of interest described reveal interest groups that may not have been previously recognized or considered in a regional ecotourism capacity (for example the strong focus on orchids). This highlights the need to research people's interests in order to ascertain what they perceive to be of value in the region, rather than to rely solely on the perceptions of local people for determining the value attributes of Northern Thailand.

Chapter 6

Visitor Opinions on Management

Khao Yai National Park was established in 1962 (Gray *et al* 1994) and since then many parks have been established and continue to be so in an urgent attempt to protect remaining forests. Despite an extensive park system, knowledge about the parks is very limited among visitors to the Chiang Mai region. 68% of foreign tourists could not name any parks, while among Thai visitors 43% could name two (Elliott 1992).

Visitor studies dealing with management issues have been carried out in Khao Yai, Doi Inthanon and Doi Suthep-Pui National Parks. A recent study in Khao Yai involved an economic assessment of park activities and people's satisfaction with park services (NREP and HIID 1995). Key conclusions drawn from the study are that both foreign and domestic visitors are willing to pay more than the current entrance fee and that an increase would be more acceptable to visitors given an improvement in services that were generally considered to be of a low standard. Most notably, two thirds of survey respondents requested more facilities for wildlife viewing with more information about these activities. Non-Thai citizens reportedly made up only 1.5% of visitors.

Elliott (1993) surveyed visitors that were departing from the northern city of Chiang Mai, Thailand's second largest city. Nearly 1000 tourists were asked questions about their attitudes towards nature and understanding of national parks. Some of the results mirror the findings of the Khao Yai study (NREP and HIID 1995). These include complaints about the lack of information and wildlife viewing facilities. Doi Suthep-Pui and Doi Inthanon were the most visited parks in the north. Respondents also indicated that they would be willing to pay high prices for seeing wildlife and unusual flowers. Concern was expressed for the need to improve garbage removal and for reforestation. The study concluded that there was widespread support for national parks protecting wildlife, that no more development is needed or wanted in the parks, and that more information is needed to better serve the needs of visitors who were generally seeking a more educational experience rather than a recreational one.

In exploring the attitudes of visitors to the natural sites, it is possible to determine where existing management policies are going right or wrong. Results may help direct how management needs to be modified to meet the educational and recreational demands of visitors for whom the park was in part set up for.

Results from Chapter 4 brought some issues to attention since there is inevitably some overlap during interviewing. Among some of the issues previously addressed were that there is excessive tourism already, and that greater attention must be paid to carrying capacities of natural sites. Excessive tourism comes often as a result of over-promotion, causing one individual to remark that there is "enough promotion already, it would be better to promote how to travel in natural areas, rather than (promote) new places". Other frequently described management concerns included the abundance of garbage, and the need to educate park visitors about ecotourism. Frustrations were directed at "high level" people who made it difficult to protect a park effectively, "if they let people damage the park they know what will happen, but they get money". In addition a poor exchange between the government and the locals undermines the successful management of a park.

Chapter 5 emphasizes the desires of people visiting natural sites, information that can help determine if management goals are appropriate to visitor demands. This chapter explores how visitors got to know about the site, what modes of transport they used to arrive, and what their thoughts are on management issues at the site.

6.1 Learning about the site

Respondents were asked how they came to find out about the site they were visiting. While many had only one source they described, others had learned about the site from several sources. The most frequently described sources were friends/colleagues and a long-time knowledge (usually from school) about Thai heritage. The sources are listed in Table 6.1. All but one of the respondents who used a guide of some description were foreign. The most popular guide among foreign visitors was the Lonely Planet Guide (35% of foreign tourists interviewed used this guide). Other guides (such as Rough Guide, Travel Survival Guide) each had only one or two users. Birds of Thailand (Lekagul and Round 1991) was used by two individuals as their main source of information. A few other specific interest sources were described. One respondent had used birding sites on the Internet while another relied on a birders club.

Source	*Occurrence (as % of total respondents n=147)*
friends/colleagues informed them	37
always known the Thai heritage	27
guidebooks of various origin	20
TAT magazines and brochures	11
other printed sources or TV	10
road signs	7
visited before	4
works nearby	3
from a map	3
from a tour company	1

Table 6.1: Information sources from which respondents learned about sites.

11% of respondents had made use of information provided by the TAT. Among other printed sources cited were leisure magazines such as Camping Magazine, and the Thai Geographic Magazine.

Results indicate that for Thai visitors word of mouth is the main way by which people learn about sites worth visiting, while among the foreign visitors there was an increased dependency on specific travel guides. The TAT's promotional efforts were employed by 11% of respondents. Only 2 of these were foreign visitors, compared to 14 Thai visitors using the TAT material.

6.2 Modes of accessing sites

Modes of access to some sites were often site specific. The most restricted of the sites was Doi Khuntan National Park, which is only easily accessible by train. This lends considerable appeal to this park. A dirt track does connect with a highway but is seldom used. The park headquarters are one kilometre from the station. Other sites where research was conducted were accessible by road. Distance from major urban centres affected the preferred choice of transport. Doi Suthep-Pui National Park is adjacent to the city, and the majority (92%) of visitors to the waterfall came by motorcycle (both foreign and Thai visitors).

Doi Inthanon National Park is approximately two hours from Chiang Mai, and is very accessible by a major highway. A road has been built to the summit and heart of the park. Here 66% of visitors interviewed had come by private or rental car and 19% had come by bus, while the remainder was on motorcycle (7.5%) or hitch-hiked (7.5%). Those with independent means of transport were more willing to be interviewed than those on buses (songtheaws), since the buses were limited by a strict schedule. Such buses were contracted by groups to take them to the summit of the mountain. Observations of tourist behaviour at the summit reveal that the bus is a very popular means by which Thai visitors come to the park. The results in this survey are thus not proportionately representative of all visitors to the park.

Visitors agreeing to be interviewed in Ob Luang National Park came in private cars or on motorcycle. This park serves as a short stop tourist attraction close to a major highway. Large buses also made stops at the site for a very brief visit to see the gorge, the main attraction of the park.

The remoter sites included Tham Lod Forest Park and Jae Son National Park. While these were both accessible by road, transport services were harder and a combination of methods was sometimes needed. At Tham Lod visitors had come by motorcycle and private or rental car. Those who came by bus could not get all the way to the village and so resorted to hitch-hiking or hiking to the village. Tour buses did come out to the site, but there were no public services.

6.3 Perceptions about access and facilities

Visitor perceptions about the management and access of sites were explored with three questions. They were asked if they had any comment about access and facilities in the area, any criticisms about the site and any suggestions for how they might manage the site differently.

6.3.1 *Doi Inthanon National Park*

Access and facilities were considered to be excellent, good or good enough by 25% of respondents. Other favourable comments about the park were directed to the friendly park staff and the good summit trail (Angkha) and boardwalk. While 7 respondents felt that existing facilities were good enough, they emphasized that it presently strikes a good balance and that no more development is needed whatsoever.

Criticisms greatly outnumbered the compliments, and covered a wide range of issues. With respect to access comments related to available information on trails and the local area. This was accompanied by poor signage for directions and interpretation, and a lack of English translations for foreign tourists. A lack of long trails was a frustration for some. The park does have some longer trails, but the information about these is poor and inconsistent, and the maps misleading – also the subject of complaints by respondents. In addition, visitors found frustration and difficulties with accommodation, some were unaware that they could stay in the park while others found difficulty in booking accommodation. With respect to the road and vehicular access, there were several complaints about the speed and excess of traffic using the road, as well as a lack of ways of getting up and into the park except by hitchhiking. Particular mention was made of the congestion at the summit.

Complaints were voiced about the facilities and a general lack of quality, from bad toilets to a lack of coffee. Others said that there were too many facilities in the park. Clearly this issue of what level of development is acceptable in a national park is a personal one.

For wildlife watchers there were frustrations from the heavy traffic noise on the road, as well as from large and noisy groups of tourists (see Photo 6.1, p.87). This was especially frustrating for birdwatchers. On busier weekends the noise level was especially worsened by local buses unnecessarily and repeatedly honking. Bad exhaust systems were also heard to be reverberating from far away. Several complaints were made about the excessive speed of many motorists, and they pleaded for people to slow down for safety – and yet one respondent requested the road be widened to overtake slower traffic. On weekdays the summit is peaceful and many endemic birds gather near the visitor centre for easy viewing. On the busier weekends, however, it was immediately apparent how quickly the normally abundant birds had disappeared, and could no longer even be heard.

Many respondents offered an interesting insight to the problems or virtues of the park. The good road to the park "allows access so more people can love nature", but then when "access is too easy" there is "too much convenience" and "we lose the nature and peace". The park has "good access, but it's no good for nature – it looks like the nature comes to visit the people, not the people coming to nature". Several said the facilities were "too much" or "too good" and that "more facilities brings more change in a non-nature friendly way". One respondent "would like to screen the people that come in" to ameliorate the behaviour in the park. For those with a deeper interest in the park there are "many possibilities for those who seek it out", despite the lack of useful information.

When asked what they didn't like or wanted to criticize, many responses mirrored the findings above. A number of key new points were made however. Some respondents said that there were too many people in the park (10%) and an equal number complained about the excessive garbage. One respondent said that many people bring garbage to the summit and leave it there, when they could simply leave with it and dispose of it elsewhere. Several respondents (11%) made mention of the military base at the summit, "when tourists come to the summit and see a radar station it is like they are in a war". Most of them said that it should be removed, and a few complained about the bad and intimidating behaviour of the soldiers, such as drinking alcohol and eyeing up women. It was noticed that soldiers started drinking before 10am and would hang out at the visitor centre for long periods when off duty.

The bare hills were mentioned by 3.5% of respondents and some questioned the park's integrity as a national park. According to one person it "looks like a hill resort" and another said it was strange to see agriculture and people everywhere. A Malaysian visitor said it was hard to believe that this was a national park.

Visitor's management suggestions

A number of interesting suggestions were made by respondents that set out to alleviate problems cited earlier, or to solve other problems. The most frequently cited suggestions are summarized below:

- improve signage and general information (7.5%);
- better regulations and policing of them (7%);
- provide more guides, rangers and interpreters (6%);
- upgrade existing facilities (5%);
- improve trails by length and number (3.5%).

Each suggestion in the following list was made by three or fewer people:

- move accommodation outside the park;
- provide more, improved accommodation;
- provide better information and education about ecotourism;
- remove military presence;
- provide better greetings and women as park rangers;
- clean up the park;
- increase entrance fee;
- provide introduction for all visitors at the park entry;
- limit numbers and charge for trail use;
- restrict access to sensitive parts of the park;
- provide regular bus services through the park;
- encourage walking and make access more "difficult";
- provide a booking service for accommodation that actually works;
- keep food concessions further from the park attractions;
- reintroduce extirpated wildlife and reforest denuded hills;
- control noise pollution;
- screen visitors for alcohol and loud music;
- involve locals in education programs and land use issues;
- train hilltribe sellers to be less aggressive;
- provide non-motorized transport for visitors coupled with interpretation.

Among the suggestions were some that were considered to be inappropriate. One respondent requested that a resort be built at the summit and another wanted a hospital, while others wanted more landscaping. A few (3.5%) of the respondents requested that more flowers be planted at the summit and by the stuppas. When asked what they meant by flowers, the unanimous response was for more ornamentals, regardless of their origin.

Already there are many introduced species at the summit of the mountain for ornamental purposes and extensive ornamental beds surround the stuppas.

Employee feedback

Interviews among park employees reiterated some of the problems described by the visitors. Heavily localized tourism (at the summit, stuppas and waterfalls) was blamed on poor bus services and the consequent preference on private cars. While some respondents were unhappy about the paucity and short length of trails, park staff indicated that there are more trails, but that it is undesirable to have all and sundry on the trails. Concerns for safety and behaviour were voiced. The provision of guides for these trails was described as budget limited, and rangers simply lacked the appropriate knowledge.

6.3.2 *Tham Lod Forest Park*

Of the respondents interviewed at the cave or nearby lodge, 20% indicated that the access and facilities were good. Other favourable comments included that it was cheap and easy, and that the simplicity of services was good and desirable.

There were difficulties encountered by some in reaching the site. Three people expressed a need for a bus service to this popular tourism destination, but one of these also recognized that improved services could result in even more visitors, the number of which was already a concern for two people. Other negative perceptions about the site included four who mentioned safety as an issue. There was concern for the elderly and that rocks were often slippery and wet. However, there was also support to leave it the way it was by three respondents, and one who thought that hard access is the way ecotourism should be.

Information was severely lacking at the site - from poor highway signs, to a lack of clear rules and information by the cave, and poor communication with the guides. None of the guides spoke English and this was a frequently voiced frustration. Few English signs added to the problem. Information about accommodation was also sought and not found. One person wanted to stay overnight to watch wildlife. In the words of one foreign visitor, "there's nothing wrong with a lot of information".

The tour through the cave was frustrating mostly because of the guides. These were described as lacking in knowledge about the cave, lacking in foreign languages, and acting as though they were in a rush to finish the tour. Discussions with one group revealed that they were still unaware of the third and final cave that has ancient coffins strewn about. Once they learned of this they became more frustrated since it was of considerable interest to the visitors. There was a feeling among some that the guides were in a rush to get back so that they would be taking another group round sooner. Most guides simply pointed out shapes in rocks that looked like various animals. Three visitors said the cost of the guide was a deterrent and inhibited them from seeing the whole cave. The cost was described as being out of line with other options in the region.

Two visitors expressed concern about the kerosene lamp that they thought polluted the air in the cave, driving away the swifts and bats and leaving black deposits. The manager was of the opinion that there were once many more bats in the caves. The lamp was also considered to be too bright, even blinding, and thus a safety issue. Another respondent said that the groups were too large for one guide with one lantern, the people at the rear having to fumble their way through near darkness. These are exactly my experiences.

Three people commented on the ugliness of the bridge recently installed by the monks from the nearby temple. It is brightly coloured and conflicts with the very natural setting surrounding it. One respondent did indicate that, despite its ugliness, it should be accepted since "the monks help the birds".

Visitor's management suggestions

Visitors were very keen to offer their opinions on what management issues should be addressed at this site. Key areas are outlined below:

- improve the guides' knowledge about cave processes and formations;
- ensure that there are some guides who can speak English and share their knowledge;
- improve information and bilingual content of interpretive signs;
- have better policing and regulations, with clear signs, for example "please do not touch" signs for the cave art; clearly indicate the regulations before entering the cave;

- delineate the path by various means to keep people from wandering and damaging limestone formations;
- provide brochures for information about the cave and site, some in durable material so that they can be reused;
- advertise just what is in the caves so that visitors are aware of the three caves and their varying content;
- provide information about the accommodation nearby;
- consider alternative lighting arrangements, for example low-level, timed electric lights, to reduce air pollution, blackening and wildlife disruption;
- promote environmental awareness;

Other suggestions that were made were less appropriate according to ethical ecotourism standards and for fairness among local groups. For example, once again the desire for filling the area with flowers was mentioned twice. Some people would like to see the bridge removed, although this would be very hard to enact considering the standing of the monks and the expense of the structure. Requests to have reduced prices for smaller groups would not work with the rotation policy used for distributing the work and money equally among the guides. Those that requested flowers also wanted to see the cave cleaned up considerably. They found the smell of swift droppings to be a deterrent and it prevented them from seeing the whole cave. However, as some respondents indicated earlier, leaving a degree of discomfort lends to the experience and should be a part of the ecotourism experience.

Employee feedback

The Director of this site indicated a desire to limit numbers once an appropriate carrying capacity could be determined. During the peak season he described that there were too many people, and that he would not want the site to go the same way as the over-promoted and damaged Tirasu Waterfall in Tak Province. He admitted to the guide's lack of knowledge in English and cave geology, but pointed out some difficulties with this. Once guides acquire proficient English skills they can leave for the city for much higher paying guiding work.

Photo 6.1 above: heavy congestion from visitors to the summit of Doi Inthanon National Park. **Photo 6.2** below: erosion problems on roads in Doi Suthep-Pui National Park.

6.3.3 *Monthatarn Falls, Doi Suthep-Pui National Park*

Almost half (48%) of respondents indicated that they found the site to be easy and good for access and facilities. Two people enjoyed the simple road and closeness of the road to nature (when referring to the road to the waterfall).

Of the negative viewpoints about this part of the park, the state of the road to the waterfall was of the greatest concern (see Photo 6.2, p.87) with 22% wanting the gravel road to be upgraded. This was opposed, however, by the same number of respondents who wanted the site to be left as it is. Access in this park was considered to be too easy, and "the better the road, the more the people". There were requests for more signs, more signs in English, and more bins with accompanying signs to control garbage. Other comments included the inappropriateness of the food stall at the site, and how the parking lot should be moved away from the falls to protect its natural setting. The toilets were set a respectable distance from the falls, but still one respondent wanted them to be closer for convenience.

The bulk of the criticisms about the site and park in general related to the amount of garbage (39% of respondents). Other criticisms additional to those mentioned above included that there were too many people in the park, too many souvenir merchants at the temple, and an excess of loud and irresponsible tourists. Concern for the hilltribes was voiced by two respondents who felt that the villagers were on show, and that the hilltribe village "is a bit of a shonk".

One respondent did not like the way the signs had been nailed to the trees. There were many small signs, some with poetic or spiritual content, randomly pinned to many of the trees. A foreign resident of Chiang Mai who had visited the falls more than 100 times had noticed a distinctive drop in the number of butterflies at the waterfall and said that on five occasions he had accosted Japanese collectors catching butterflies. The manager of Chiang Mai Green Trekking and Tour expressed deep concern that she received phone calls from Japan requesting information about where the best places are to catch butterflies, information she was not prepared to divulge. This was further supported by comments from a guide on an ecotour in Doi Chiang Dao Wildlife Sanctuary. I had noticed the almost complete lack of butterflies from a region where diversity and numbers should have been great, and he blamed the Japanese who used to come in great numbers to the sanctuary ten years ago, until there were no butterflies left. The problem is evidently serious, even within such close proximity to the city of Chiang Mai.

Visitor's management suggestions

Most suggestions relate to the criticisms outlined above. The principal suggestions were:

- clean up the garbage and provide more bins (26%);
- upgrade the waterfall access road (26%);
- provide rangers to give information on trails, temples, security and policing (17%);
- maintain trails and provide interpretive signs (also in English) that help increase tourist's conservation awareness (17%).

A few other suggestions were made once or twice only. An entry fee was suggested for the park. However, there are problems with respect to access to the religious site and the palace on the mountain which make an entry fee hard to administer. Two people requested that the commercial component of the park be better concealed or managed while another said that a shop by the waterfall would be desirable. Three respondents suggested that it all be left exactly as it is. A foreign visitor wanted an end to the hilltribe tourism since it was such an invasion of the village people. The foreign resident who noticed the butterfly issue suggested that signs, specifically in Japanese, be erected to prohibit butterfly collecting.

Employee feedback

Senior management said that there was no real system and process for managing the park, especially among the hilltribe villages. Rangers were apparently on staff to serve as guides with knowledge about the park and wildlife. There was, however, no information or evidence apparent, even in the headquarters and visitor centre, that this was the case or at all possible. Tour groups were described as not a concern since they stay on the road, yet they do cause noise, heavy traffic and garbage problems. The foreign tourists were considered to be well aware of proper behaviour in the park and for the Thai tourists, who "do not know about nature", the visitor centre was set up to inform them. A new visitor centre planned at the base and entrance to the park will reportedly set out to do this more effectively. In the visitor centre the employees indicated that there was a problem in dealing with foreign tourists who were seeking information about trails and camping opportunities. A lack of English meant that frequently no information was imparted. Two employees said that it is the foreigners who want to hike in the park, and that Thais have no interest in the nature.

6.3.4 *Jae Son National Park*

Only 12 people participated in the survey at this site, and of those just over half found the site to be very convenient and accessible. The roads were complimented and one respondent said that it was good to have the ranger near the waterfall. Negative perceptions were about the signs on the roads to get to the park, which were inadequate for two respondents, and that the toilets were too far from the waterfall.

Two respondents did not like the smell of the hotsprings, and three complained about the garbage. Interestingly, one person also complained about the abundance of garbage bins in the park. The missing link here would definitely be the visitor's inability to actually make use of the garbage bins. One complaint was received about the restaurant facilities, that they were bad.

Visitor management suggestions

Of the management suggestions four people wanted more information in the form of rangers, interpretive signs and promotion. Three people wanted more bins and a clean-up. However, the number of bins is already excessive and the problem needs to be addressed differently, through greater awareness and education. Tighter management for the restaurant area was suggested, and that it be restricted to one area. More toilets closer to attractions, more flowers at the sites and more picnicking areas were also requested, though for the most part could be considered inappropriate.

Employee feedback

This site was described as the latest hot spot for people from Bangkok, and that those visiting had no interest in seeing the forest. The main pastime was boiling eggs in the hotsprings, and very few of these would make it as far as the waterfall. In the words of a volunteer at the park, "I really don't think Thai people like to walk in nature to tell you the truth". He described that there is no incentive for the local people to be guides, many of them already have jobs in the park and are not interested. "Work is work" and is best demonstrated by one park ranger who reportedly knows his brother comes into the park to hunt. One ranger described the easy-life attitude of the people, and how he has to tell people to take their garbage even a few paces to the nearest bin - although he was optimistic for the future generation.

6.3.5 *Ob Luang National Park*

Low numbers at this site also limited the findings. Of the 11 respondents 5 thought that the facilities and access were good and easy. Other compliments included the cleanliness, the good food services and a reported improvement over the last ten years. Others criticized the over-development of the site, the difficulty in getting good information, the noisy camping site during peak season and a trail hard to access because of the plants.

Other criticisms included the restricted camping area, poor service from park staff, a lack of interpretive officers and the abundance of garbage. One visitor was disappointed that all the artifacts from the burial site had been removed leaving nothing but a patch of soil and a sign indicating what was there.

Visitor management suggestions

A request for more accommodation came as a result of the lack of information about the existing facilities. Another visitor requested more space for camping, but this is limited by local geography. Two visitors wanted more flowers along the trails. A safety officer was proposed as a good idea for the site, and one visitor wanted an opportunity to give feedback to the park managers using an evaluation form.

Employee feedback

The existence of more trails (only one was at all evident to visitors) was indicated, but they are not open to the public for safety concerns. The staff considered that a guide was necessary for the visitor's safety. When asked to clarify what the safety issues were in the park, none were immediately described. Later the steep cliffs of the gorge and reptiles were considered to be the park's dangers. While this park appeared to have the best information available compared to all other sites visited, visitors still complained about the lack of information. One employee attributed this to the lack of awareness among Thai visitors about the concept of a Visitor Centre, rather thinking that the building is some kind of luxury accommodation.

6.3.6 *Doi Khuntan National Park*

Regrettably only two visitors agreed to be interviewed at this site, in part because of extremely low visitation even on weekends. Both foreign visitors complimented the well-marked trails in the park, noting this to be an unusual quality for a Thai national park. They criticized, however, the poor time-tabling of the trains (the only easy means by which to access the park), the incorrect and frustrating maps and a lack of English signs. The previously logged areas were very noticeable to one of the visitors, and the unsightly road was a disappointing introduction to hiking in the park, although it did eventually become a trail. A request for a source of food and water was made since the small food store was closed when they arrived.

Employee feedback

Staff at this park were pleased to deal with smaller numbers of people. The limited access (by train) was described as a possible reason why few people come, and a higher proportion of foreigners came (reportedly as much as 25% which is at least five times other park figures). Many youth groups came for a few days, and hiked up to the summit. Park staff were enthusiastic at welcoming people and were willing to give information despite difficulties with language barriers.

6.4 Common management issues

While each site has its own problems and issues to which respondents made comments, there are a number of prevalent characteristics that run in common between some sites, and may be applicable elsewhere. The following were considered to be notable:

- trail information and interpretive signs in both Thai and English so visitors have improved knowledge on the opportunities for recreation in the site;
- more trails and of greater length to meet enthusiasts demand and cater for special interest groups such as birders;
- improved and accurate maps showing parks and trails;
- improved booking and information for accommodation, but strictly limit any further development of accommodation within natural areas;
- clean up garbage and promote cleaner behaviour and responsibility among tourists;
- promote and inform visitors about regulations, and provide better enforcement;
- control large groups and noise levels by increasing awareness and enforcement;
- provide bilingual guides and rangers for interpretive purposes;
- improve public transport at some sites to help reduce dependency on private or rental vehicles, reducing congestion and pollution and risky alternatives such as hitch-hiking;
- better promotion of environmental issues at park gates, visitor centres and through advertising;
- consider limits on certain tourist activities in sensitive sites by determining appropriate carrying capacities;
- consider limits on facilitating access to all natural sites to help impose a natural order of limitation;
- control and limit concession activities, keeping them clear of natural attractions.

6.5 Discussion

The common sources for learning about sites has implications for promotion and protection of sites for the future, especially for promotion of conservation and ecotourism values. The dominant origin of information for Thai visitors was by word of mouth or through education about Thailand's heritage when at school. Channels such as this make promotion of sustainable tourism practices challenging. Through education in schools, however, appropriate values and practices in the tourism industry could be well received, especially when put into the context of Thailand's natural heritage and its long-term protection. By setting an example of sound practice in children, the effects may transpose onto the parents. One key source of information the residents of Thailand did use was promotional material issued by the TAT. This, then, represents an important channel through which to communicate environmental awareness among tourists. Presently the TAT issues little such information, although they have formulated a guide for policies for the development of ecotourism. This brochure is not geared or meant for tourists, but represents a solid grounding on which the TAT may oversee development of ecotourism initiatives in the future. The issue of channels for promotion of the values of ecotourism also has implications with respect to Innovation Theory. With a wide-reaching potential readership, there lies the opportunity to educate and inform people about these ecotourism concepts. With a greater level of understanding among people generally, there will be greater awareness and interest, and this may facilitate acceptance of the concepts of ecotourism, as well as the adoption of the innovation.

Foreigners were greatly dependent on guides aimed at travellers in Thailand. Only two indicated that they were using the resources issued by the TAT. The TAT is possibly missing out on a valuable and important opportunity at reaching foreign visitors, a major part of the tourism market which it was set up to serve. The offices could be a major source of information for visitors, information that could expand on the limited content of countrywide guides used by nearly all foreign visitors. Perhaps the way the TAT promotes itself is not reaching out to the foreign tourists sufficiently. While maps of the city mark the TAT office, it could be that the naming of the office intimidates people from seeking information there. An "Authority" sounds more like a government department than a friendly office to which people are invited for help and information. The perception and use of the TAT offices by foreign visitors could benefit from further research.

For the most part visitors found access to be easy. There were many concerns raised about the possibilities of new development, such as road-building. Those who wished to comment on this tended to suggest that no more is necessary. Northern Thailand and its natural areas are already well served, and some visitors went as far as saying it was just too easy. In most cases the key tourist attractions of the parks had access roads built right up to the site. This brings about further retail and services development that encroaches and clutters the natural setting. Requests to better manage this effect were made, as was a limit on further access roads. Some tourists pointed out the consequence of facilitating access, that the site then becomes too accessible and over run with tourists. Doi Suthep-Pui National Park demonstrates this with the major highway that now cuts through the park to the temple. As a result large and heavily polluting buses carry many more tourists to the temple than before.

Improved public transport, within parks, would bring benefits in several ways. Doi Inthanon National Park is overrun with private vehicles. Especially noticeable are the songtheaws (buses) contracted to take groups up into the park. These are loud and heavily polluting. The condition at the summit of Doi Inthanon on a holiday weekend was deplorable, with pollution levels that I observed to be worse than the city of Chiang Mai (as a result of calm weather fumes were not dispersed). Provision of park transport services could bring better flow to traffic, reduce pollution and dependency on private vehicles and better serve foreign visitors who complained about having to find alternative and higher-risk means of reaching the summit, such as by hitch-hiking. A "captive" audience in a bus could also be a perfect opportunity to offer interpretive services and messages about appropriate behaviour in the park.

Dissatisfaction with services and facilities supports the findings of the study by NREP and HIID (1995). In addition many of the results concur with Elliott (1993). These include complaints about the amount of garbage and the need for its removal, a desire to see that no more development takes place and a request for more information. For the most part respondents dealt with their dissatisfactions by recommending changes in management as described in sections 6.3 and 6.4. Given improved services and facilities without over-development, both Thai and foreign visitors were willing to pay a higher fee for entry (NREP and HIID 1995). With respect to fees, it was the opinion of some senior park staff that a higher fee for foreigners is not the "Thai way" of welcoming visitors to Thailand's natural heritage. However, with people's willingness to pay more considerable sums of money for entry to see special wildlife, the sites could benefit greatly from an increased revenue that could help the impoverished and under-funded Forestry Department better manage the wealth of national parks in the country.

Chapter 7

Regional Ecotourism: Site Inventories, Opportunities and Personal Observations

An extensive park system and beautiful natural heritage present Thailand with a promising nature-based tourism industry, given appropriate management. This natural diversity already appeals to both domestic and foreign tourists. A growing tourism market and the wealth of attractive natural areas make the expansion of the nature-based tourism industry in Thailand very feasible (Chudintra 1993). The boom in such ecotourism activities in Southeast Asia is well acknowledged (Campbell 1994).

The diversity in landscape and natural wonders is well documented (for example see IUCN 1992 and Midas Agronomics Company 1993). In 1990 it is estimated that about one million (20%) of Thailand's foreign tourists visited nature tourism sites (Campbell 1994). From these visitors the TAT says that a clear pattern of behaviour is emerging. This includes that the visitors are now more independent and that they are repeat travellers undertaking their own tours to nature-based tourism destinations (Dowling and Hardman 1995).

In a study conducted in Northern Thailand, the most visited national park was Doi Suthep-Pui as 20% of foreigners and 33% of Thais surveyed had visited the park during their holiday (Elliott 1992). Doi Inthanon National Park was second most popular, but was visited by only 5% of foreigners and 22% of Thais. The most popular attraction in Doi Suthep-Pui was the temple (68%), but 66% said they liked to walk forest trails and 63% liked visiting waterfalls. Stays in both parks varied from one day to longer stays involving overnight camping or in accommodation provided by the Forestry Department. At Doi Inthanon National Park 75% of the visitors walked along forest trails and visited waterfalls. Interest in natural attractions is evidently very high in this study. Higher visitation to Doi Suthep-Pui can easily be accounted for by its proximity to the city of Chiang Mai, while Doi Inthanon is two hours drive away.

A highly variable topography of flat basins, granitic mountains and limestone karst scenery, coupled with remnant forest patches, has led to the establishment of many more national parks and other protected sites in the northern region. By the end of 1996 there were some 16 listed national parks. The city of Chiang Mai is centrally located in the north, and makes an ideal point from which to visit many of these and other sites. The existing tourism industry has a heavy emphasis on hilltribe tourism with many agencies running day treks or longer treks into the mountains, with possible visits in national parks unbeknownst to the tourists (and often the guides). The shift in tourism activities has been toward more recreational nature-based activities (Dearden and Harron 1994).

The development of an expanded ecotourism industry may have its advantages if properly managed. The protected areas system has been criticized for being grossly under-funded (McNeely and Dobias 1991), and an increase in visitation to other parks could generate much-needed revenue to support the park system. Griffin (1994) advocates dispersion to reduce the impacts of high level visitation in sensitive areas. On a regional level dispersion could encompass the promotion of other national parks or other natural sites beyond the two already described here. Western (1993) highlights the dangers of potential "hit and run" ecotourism resulting from over-promotion of particular sites. Parks such as Doi Inthanon may be close to such failure considering the high level of promotion and high visitation. There is considerable danger and misleading messages in marketing a visit to the summit of the mountain as an ecotourism venture, when it is really mass tourism in the guise of an ecotourism label. The role of the TAT in appropriate promotion is therefore critical. In addition the arrival of ecotourists may serve as a policing force over local behaviours, possibly assisting in the understaffed ranger services currently provided in protected areas. This may reduce such activities as tree harvesting and poaching in less visited national parks such as Jae Son. Here, recently felled hardwood trees were found on a trail within a few hundred metres of the headquarters.

An interest by the TAT to expand ecotourism activities and increase foreign revenue is very possible, but there is risk in solely promoting ecotourism for financial gain. In Chapter 4 respondents were cautious about how ecotourism should be developed, and to what to extent. The nature of business and profit could overrun the ethics behind ecotourism. Nonetheless, the respondents had a very favourable impression of the potential for ecotourism in Northern Thailand. In Chapter 5 a variety of interests in nature were described, and may help determine management options in the future, given the stress on themes in nature for successful marketing of ecotourism activities (Brockelman and Dearden 1990). For the most part people's sensitivities to natural order became obvious, respondents recommending sensible and cautious management options that need to be met to improve the site and visitor satisfaction (Chapter 6).

This chapter examines people's desires for places to visit or already visited, and the opinions of park staff and my personal observations of sites visited as to their potential in becoming part of a broader ecotourism venture in the region. The activities and offers of trekking agencies in the city of Chiang Mai are explored, and their role in the ecotourism considered.

7.1 Visitor's sightseeing behaviour at sites

7.1.1 *Doi Inthanon National Park*

Visitors were asked what they had already seen at the site or nearby, and what they intended to see for the rest of their visit. Respondents first described local sites they had visited, then went further to list sites visited at the regional level. Table 7.1 lists the findings for Doi Inthanon National Park.

In Doi Inthanon National Park the most popular attraction is the summit and its viewpoints. Many people also emphasized waterfalls as a key focus of their visit. The typical pattern of behaviour was that visitors would drive to the summit first, then visit other sites on their way down, notably the waterfalls and stuppas. The Angkha trail was mentioned by 27% of respondents, and such high visitation is probably the consequence of its proximity to the summit region and its notoriety for harbouring one of the rare and very colourful rhododendrons. Collectively birds made up a large part of visitor activities, but some people mentioned them twice because they had seen birds already, and had the intention of undertaking further birding after the interview. The cultural component (hilltribe villages) was a part of only 12% of interviewed visitors' activities, suggesting that the natural sites were far more important for visitors than culture. One respondent indicated that he would hike more trails than Angkha, if only they could be found.

Sightseeing in Doi Inthanon	*% of visitors (n=75)*
summit and views	84
waterfalls	65
stuppas	36
Angkha trail	27
birds	21
jeep trail for birds	12
specific km points or the checkpoint for birds	8
hilltribes and the Royal Project	12
Gew Mae Pan trail	11
forests	11
fog at the summit	9
flowers/rhododendron	5
road to Mae Chem	4
tourists	3
other trails if they can be found	3
cave	1
radar station	1
bare hills	1

Table 7.1: Visitor's sightseeing behaviour at Doi Inthanon National Park, as a percentage total of respondents from that site.

Previous research conducted by Elliott (1992) indicated that three quarters of visitors to this park had walked along forest trails. This is remarkably different from the findings of this study, where only one quarter of respondents indicated that they had even walked on the Angkha trail at the summit, the most easily accessible and convenient trail to use.

Staff at the park were asked what they thought visitors came to see and enjoyed. The focus on the summit was described as the main attraction, largely because of limitations in transport for most people who rely on public transport. Other focal points were the stuppas and the Vachiratharn Falls, also because public transport stopped at these sites. No mention was made of trail use.

7.1.2 *Tham Lod Forest Park*

Given Tham Lod's small size and obvious focus and theme of the cave, most interview participants mentioned that they had seen the cave. Other sightseeing activities related to regional attractions nearby. However, of the 25 respondents, only 20% said that they had seen the swifts returning to the cave at dusk. This is a grand spectacle during which possibly millions of swifts return to their roosts for the night. It was interesting to note that all of these visitors were staying at Cave Lodge nearby, run by John Spies. Here they had found out the information about the swifts and knew when and where to go. All the visitors to the cave not staying at the lodge either failed to learn about the swifts or had no desire to see them. The former case is more likely given the lack of information and poor signage about which people complained. During discussions two visitors were fascinated to learn about the existence of a third cave in the network of Tham Lod, and were disappointed that the guide had not shown them this cave. They were thus prepared to pay for a second visit just to see these archaeological sites. Others, having experienced this one cave, indicated that they would be visiting more in the region.

Management at this site was under the impression that most visitors see the whole cave. It is quite likely that given better information and awareness about the cave and its contents, more would visit. The swifts can attract up to 20 people each night during peak season. He said that these people learn about the swifts from Cave Lodge (John Spies). He believes that others may see the sign, but that most tourists do not know about them, and know only about the river running through the cave. This again demonstrates the need, already recognized, that better information could result in a more satisfying and complete experience for visitors at this site.

7.1.3 *Doi Suthep-Pui National Park*

In Doi Suthep-Pui National Park interviews were conducted at a somewhat secluded waterfall at a lower elevation than the famous temple, the primary reason most visits are made to the park. Of the 23 visitors at the waterfall, 12 had also seen the temple, and 2 had visited the palace. Five remarked at the beauty of the forest at the site and the impressive size of the trees. Flowers, snakes, spiders and birds were all mentioned and the peace and lack of people was noted by 3 respondents. The same number had also "seen" the amount of garbage. Only 2 people had hiked to the summit of Doi Pui, and none of those interviewed had hiked the downhill trail from the temple to the waterfall. When asked what else they wanted to see in the park, wildlife, orchids and the salamander were mentioned, as was the zoo at the foot of the park. Only 1 person said they were going to see the hilltribe villages, and 6 had already seen them. Much like the visitors interviewed in Doi Inthanon, the focus seemed to be more towards nature than culture amongst this group of people who had sought out the waterfall.

Elliott (1993) ascertained that two thirds of visitors visited the temple, and that approximately two thirds liked to visit waterfalls and walk on forest trails. If this number of visitors like walking on trails, very few sought out the option of doing just this in this national park. One of the best trails leaves from park headquarters to Monthatarn waterfall, a mostly gentle hike through beautiful forest. In one week, only one group used this trail, out of a possible several thousand visitors to the park. In contrast to my observations, respondents in Elliott's survey indicated that they like to walk trails. It is possible that Elliott's respondents like to walk trails but never actually did, or that many people want to walk trails but could not find them due to a lack of information about hiking possibilities in the park. It is possible that the answer lies somewhere in between.

A British consultant and ornithologist working in Chiang Mai was of the opinion that birdwatchers are now avoiding Doi Suthep-Pui since bird numbers have declined and now there are better places to go to. Conference speakers discussing the fate of birds on the mountain were of the same opinion and suggested that large birds such as hawks and eagles had gone, replaced by birds that thrive where disturbance is great. For ecotourism, park management said that people come for birds and plants, and a good trail network. Most visitors were described as visiting the palace, temple and hilltribes, and that the ecotourists were a minority. Two park rangers went further, saying that the Thai tourists are not interested in nature and that it is mostly the foreign tourists who use the trails. In a full week spent at the end of one of the trails only one group was seen to use the trail, and this was a foreign group. This was one of the principal trails in the park and most accessible. When asked if there are fewer birds in the park, one ranger said that this was the case and the result of more people now visiting the park coupled with very noisy trucks driving out to the hilltribe villages. Most people reportedly come to the park just to see the temple, and many do not even know it is a park. One interviewee remarked, "You mean this is a national park?"

7.1.4 *Jae Son National Park*

In Jae Son National Park 58% of visitors at the waterfall had also seen the hotsprings and hotspa. This number was unexpectedly low considering that visitors had to pass the springs in order to reach the waterfall. However, 3 others indicated that they would later visit the springs. The primary focus then would appear to be the waterfall. Only one person had hiked the forest trail up to the dam.

A volunteer in this park said the main activity in this park was not so much the sightseeing, more the location. The main pastime, if it was not boiling eggs in the hotspring, was drinking whiskey and eating food. He was also of the opinion that it is only the foreigners who are interested in nature. A ranger agreed that the number one feature was not the hotspring, but the waterfall. Only 3 groups a year were reported to use a 5km trail to another waterfall. Other worthy sights were several caves, and many wild animals. There was no information for tourists about any of these.

7.1.5 *Ob Luang National Park*

At Ob Luang interviews were conducted at the gorge. Of the 10 people interviewed, 7 said that they had visited the prehistoric burial site, and only 2 mentioned the wall paintings. This high level of visitation to the burial site is possibly not representative of typical visitor behaviour at this site. For many it is a quick stop while en route to another destination, and these passing tourists seldom had the time to discuss their visit. Those with time to walk the trail to the prehistoric sites were more likely to have the time for an interview. Due to the proximity of the attractions people had few further items they expected to see in this park. There were, however, two respondents who said that they would like to hike into the forest if only there some trails by which to do this.

Staff here spoke about the gorge and prehistoric attractions being the important features of this park, as well as a hotspring, cave and waterfall. However, no visitors mentioned the hotspring, cave or waterfall, and there were no signs to them, nor any information indicating that such things existed. Additional trails of greater length were mentioned, but were still in "development", and that this would take some time given the lack of staff. One employee thought that the trails into the hills are too hard, yet the topography from my perspective was unremarkable and hilly, rather than precipitous.

7.1.6 *Doi Khuntan National Park*

The two visitors at this site described hiking trails and visiting waterfalls as their activities. In order to see or do anything in this park, it is necessary to hike to the attractions. Perhaps this in part accounts for such low visitation, coupled with a lack of key features such as temples and landscaped gardens.

Staff indicated that the main activities in this park for tourists were education about nature, birdwatching and camping. Relaxing and immersion in nature were also mentioned. "Visitors who like quiet places know this is the place to come". The tunnel by the main entrance is a draw for visitors, since everybody has reportedly heard about it in Thailand.

7.2 Sites of interest or on the agendas of visitors

Participants were asked where else they had been in the north, where else they intended to go, and where they would have gone given a longer stay. This information was considered to be useful in order to ascertain which, if any, other natural sites were being visited, as well as cultural or other sites. Table 7.2 presents the range of sites people had in mind. Some sites pertain to towns, others to parks, and some are general comments for sites visitors wished to see. Also shown is the emphasis for listed sites, be it cultural or natural, or both.

Respondents listed a broad spectrum of sites. As expected these ranged from entirely cultural experiences to completely nature-based. Hilltribes and trekking were on 20% of people's agendas. This shows a higher interest in cultural attractions than other results suggest, but also shows that for many people visiting the northern regions a multifaceted experience is part of the Thai experience. The province and town of Mae Hong Son gained high recognition for a diversity of reasons, some for the natural component such as at Doi Mae Uko where the sunflowers carpet the hills.

Other national parks were mentioned or implied. Not including the sites listed where interviews were conducted, four parks were mentioned. Frequently attractions in

Site/activity	*n*	*Site description*
hilltribes and treks	20	hilltribe villages and treks between
Mae Hong Son	16	town and province, hilltribes and forests
Pai	7	town
Doi Suthep wat and palace	6	national park – cultural attractions
Mae Sariang	6	town
Doi Inthanon National Park	6	cultural and natural attractions, royal project
waterfalls	6	non-specific
Doi Tung	5	royal project, cultural attractions, flowers
Doi Mae Uko	4	sunflowers on bare hillsides
Mae Sai	4	town
hotsprings	3	non-specific
Golden Triangle	3	region, cultural attraction
Doi Mae Salong	3	resort and flowers
Tham Pla (Fish Cave)	3	cave and spiritual site with large fish
elephant rides	3	non-specific
Doi Suthep-Pui for birds	2	national park, wildlife attractions
Jae Son National Park	2	national park, waterfall and hotspring
Phu Chi Fa	2	mountain, natural and cultural attractions
Doi Pa Tang	2	mountain, natural and cultural attractions
Huai Nam Dang National Park	2	flowers and hilltribes
Sri Satchanalai National Park	2	cultural attraction
temples	2	non-specific
border regions	2	non-specific, cultural
Chiang Rai province	2	mostly cultural
Tham Lod Forest Park	1	cave
caves and sinkholes	1	in Mae Hong Song province
Hot	1	town
Mae Sot	1	town
Mae Hong Son for birds	1	province for wildlife
Lampang (carriages)	1	town, cultural attractions
Phumipol Dam	1	Mae Ping National Park, natural attractions
Doi Luang National Park	1	natural attractions
Mae Rim	1	town
Samoeng	1	town
Doi Chiang Dao cave	1	cave and cultural attraction
Pa Mon cave	1	cave
Rang Kam cave	1	cave
Ob Luang National Park	1	gorge, prehistoric site, natural attractions
Doi Chiang Dao	1	mountain, natural attractions
national parks generally	1	natural attractions
birds	1	wildlife
Doi Inthanon NP for birds	1	wildlife
Nan province	1	general

Table 7.2: Sites and activities of interest for tourists and the main focus of that site.

the parks were mentioned without the park's name being mentioned, such as the Phumipol Dam in Mae Ping National Park. It seemed to be the case on many occasions that people were unaware whether they were in a park or not. This became apparent during discussions with tour guides in Chiang Mai, who would describe locations and routes, but when pressed to say whether any of the trekking routes were in parks, they did not know, and would then refer to one trek incorporating Doi Inthanon National Park. This is despite the fact that many of the routes did pass through national parks or other protected areas.

7.3 Visitor behaviour trends

The dominant behaviour in national parks or other natural sites is to visit the key attractions. Most parks are set around one or more focal points to which the majority of tourists go. These key attractions can be either cultural or natural. However, there is a tendency among visitors to prefer natural attractions over cultural attractions such as hilltribe villages. (The temple on Doi Suthep is one major exception, and is a result of the significance of the temple in Buddhist culture and its proximity and beauty so close to an urban centre.) The overwhelming majority of visitors are concentrated in very small portions of the park, and apparently in very few parks.

In nature-based sites the interest in natural attractions overrides the cultural attractions. As many people expressed birding as part of their agenda as hilltribes in Doi Inthanon National Park for example. One of the key drawbacks for visitors in these sites is that, while they have a strong interest in things natural, the information about them is not available to the visitors. The satisfaction of the nature-based experience is probably greatly diminished by this lack of information, since it is often the cultural features of a park that are accessible and about which some information is available. More information catering for people interested in nature is essential if these parks are to be considered refuges for Thai wildlife and forests. Doi Suthep-Pui National Park demonstrates this inadequacy perfectly. The majority of visitors know about it only for the temple, while it harbours some of the finest forests to be seen in the region. The natural component of the park is hardly publicized at all. In a tourism and souvenir brochure on northern regions, that the temple is situated in beautiful forest is not mentioned, nor that it is located in a park. In my experience of the forests of Northern Thailand, this park had some of the finest forest and trees to be seen and is a heritage that remains unappreciated, and therefore in danger of being neglected.

Some of the often-mentioned cultural differences between foreign and domestic visitors to natural attractions are whether the Thai people like to walk and whether they obey park regulations. During interviews with site employees and managers (all were Thai but one), the common opinion was that the Thai people do not like to walk, and that it is the foreign visitors who ask to use trails. At one national park, Thai tourists were described as "tourists who come to take a rest and have fun". In Doi Suthep-Pui National Park "for Thais it is the temple, foreigners prefer to walk in the park". In Jae Son a foreign volunteer said that he would not imagine one Thai using any of the trails in the park, adding "I really don't think Thai people like to walk in nature to tell you the truth". The manager of a Forest Park was of the opinion that it is the foreigners who are the ecotourists, and perhaps the Thais could be considered to be if they use the local guides.

However, there is evidence that the Thai people are perfectly capable of enjoying their natural heritage, and putting in the effort for rewards. Public relations officers at Ob Luang National Park Thai reported that students frequently asked about trails, and in Doi Suthep-Pui the rangers described many activities in the park arranged for students. In Doi Khuntan National Park a good deal of effort is required to see any of the park's cultural and natural heritage. Three quarters of the visitors are Thai, most of them stay overnight, and many of these are students who wish to learn about nature. While hiking in this park a large group of Thai hikers was encountered at higher elevations. Staff in the park reported that both Thai and foreign visitors hiked all the way up to the summit, a good day hike. The trend is for young people to have an interest in nature. The passion for birding had undergone an interesting evolution following the much-held belief that the Thais were not interested in the activity. Now bird clubs are found countrywide, with one of the most recent being set up in 1997 for Mae Hong Son residents (Duangsri pers. comm.). The dominance of Thai birders from Bangkok on the summit of Doi Inthanon is testament to the level of interest that now exists in birding. It is very possible, given the interest in nature among the younger generations, that the demand for nature-based and educational visits to national parks could escalate considerably in future years. It is therefore important that visitor centres such as the one at Doi Suthep-Pui cater not just for foreign interested parties (as is their current conception), but also for Thai groups.

While the interest in nature in parks may be growing, the following of park regulations is far from successful. Many people at nearly all sites complained about the garbage, the need for better enforcement of regulations, and the need for improved education about environmental responsibility (Chapter 6). A Thai park ranger commented that "foreign tourists are better than Thai tourists who never respect the rules". Doi Khuntan National Park requires an interest in the park and a degree of effort to experience it. The expectation would be that the people are therefore more considerate of nature. However, garbage in this park was a serious problem. Plastic bottles lined the trails, and the summit had an excess of garbage overflowing from poorly maintained bins. The respect for the park has yet to be instilled. It is commonly felt that this is a cultural adaptation to the modern "disposable" society. Formerly dependent on organic wrappings for food (e.g. banana leaves), Thai society has yet to adapt to plastic wrappings, which, when discarded on the floor, do not rot as in the old way. It was not just the observation of foreigners that garbage was a problem, but also of many Thai visitors. This again may reflect a gradual change in attitudes and behaviour that will hopefully improve in future years as the interest in natural heritage and respect for nature also increases.

7.4 Nature-based attractions

7.4.1 *The people's inventory*

Table 7.2 listed the incidence of sites that were or were desired to be on visitor's agendas. A number of questions were directed at interviewees to encourage them to think about the various sites they had or would like to have visited, and sites from which they could describe perhaps a favourite natural experience. The incidence of site names is recorded in Table 7.3 with a brief description about the virtues of the site for tourism purposes as described by the participants in the survey and during interviews with park staff and others. Incidence is taken from all appropriate source questions and interviews, and each individual mention of a site is recorded as one incidence. Specifically site related questions and answers are not incorporated into the analysis. Location by province is listed in Table 7.4 for all the attractions that could be placed to particular provinces.

Doi Inthanon National Park was by far the highest-ranking site to be mentioned, visited or recommended as a worthwhile ecotourism destination. For the most part the other attractions are either natural or have a blend of natural and cultural components. A broad spectrum of sites was listed, although most of these received recognition from very few individuals. All provinces but one (Uttaradit) were mentioned. Geographically these show an anticipated rate of popularity or recommendation for tourism or nature-based tourism activities. Chiang Mai is the central city for tourism and communications, and it is expected that visitors become familiar with the attractions in this province first, given their proximity to the city. It is also the first province to be served infrastructurally and surveyed for the purpose of tourism developments. Chiang Rai province had 15 sites and, given its accessibility from Chiang Mai, is popular for the border crossings and Golden Triangle for which the province is well known. Mae Hong Son province is a more remote province, and had many sites listed as places of interest, nearly all of which

Table 7.3: Inventory of described sites, sourced from all interviews, with the frequency of occurrence, and motive or value of the site (CRP = Chiang Rai Province, CMP = Chiang Mai Province, MHSP = Mae Hong Son Province).

Name	***n***	***site motive***
Doi Inthanon NP – nature	47	waterfalls, forests, birds, general nature, CMP
Doi Inthanon NP – general	19	general nature and culture, CMP
Doi Inthanon NP – climate	16	cool climate with clouds at the summit, CMP
Mae Hong Son province	35	mountains, curvy roads, nature, forests, birds, caves
Doi Tung	28	royal project, flowers, birds, reforestation, CRP
hilltribes	21	general; specific by name – Karen 8, Padaung 4, Lahu 2, Hmong 1
Doi Mae Uko	16	seasonal sunflowers MHSP
Doi Chiang Dao Wildlife Sanctuary	16	mountainous, trekking, natural beauty, birds, CMP
Doi Suthep-Pui NP – nature	15	nature, trails, birds, CMP
Doi Suthep-Pui NP – culture	12	temple, palace, hilltribes, CMP
Mae Sai town and region	14	border regions, cheap goods, CRP
Doi Angkhan	14	natural beauty, royal project, hilltribes, birds,

		CMP
Doi Mae Salong	13	hill-walking, Sakura trees and flowers, low tourism, resort accommodation, CRP
Chiang Rai province	13	general sightseeing, culturally based
Golden Triangle	12	cultural region, CRP
Jae Son NP	11	hotspring and waterfall, Lampang province
Tham Lod (cave)	11	cave with river rafting, resident swifts, MHSP
Phu Chi Fa	10	mountain, nature, views, summit clouds, CRP
Huai Nam Dang NP	9	flowers, nature, climate, low tourism, scenery, wildlife, waterfall, geyser, CMP
general natural beauty in the North	7	non-specific praise
waterfalls in Pai region	6	waterfalls, MHSP
Mae Sariang	6	town in MHS
Tham Pla	5	cave with buddhist site and large feeding fish, MHSP
Mae Surin waterfall	5	near Mae Surin NP, highest Thai waterfall, MHSP
Tirasu waterfall	5	in Tak province
Doi Luang NP	5	waterfall, CRP
Om Koi Wildlife Sanctuary	5	rhododendron, goral, mountains, forests, CMP
Chiang Saen	4	birds, waterfowl, CRP
elephant rides	4	general
Ob Luang NP	4	gorge, prehistoric site, CMP
Nan province	4	hilltribes and low tourism
Doi Khuntan NP	4	natural beauty and climate, tunnel, Lampang province
Taton	3	birds, hilltribes, longboat river ride, CMP
Samoeng	3	beautiful road trip through forests, CMP
Sri Satchanalai NP	3	waterfalls, Sukhothai province
Mae Sot	3	town, Tak province
Doi Phu Tang	3	mountain, views, clouds, "like Doi Inthanon", CRP
Mae Sa waterfall	3	in Doi Suthep-Pui NP, CMP
Mock Fa waterfall	3	on Chiang Mai – Pai highway, CMP
Salawin NP	3	river trip, natural beauty, MHSP
Fang	3	mountains, rafting, crafts, CMP
Doi Tao reservoir	3	unknown
Mae Chem	3	traditional town and people, CMP
Tham Pa Mon	3	cave, MHSP
Phu Sang waterfall	2	Phayao province

Table 7.3 cont. Inventory of described sites, sourced from all interviews, with the frequency of occurrence, and motive or value of the site.

Mae Taeng	2	forests, trekking, CMP
Mae Ping NP	2	forests, river, rafting, Lamphun and Tak provinces
Maekhong river	2	bordering Laos, CRP
Bong Denat hotspring	2	hotspring, location unknown
Phrae province	2	low tourism
Pai river	2	rafting, wildlife, MHSP
Doi Phuka NP	3	forests, rare botany, Nan Province
Mae Rim	2	natural beauty road trip, CMP
Sukhothai	2	ancient capital of thailand, World Heritage Site, Sukhothai province
Doi Montjong Wildlife Sanctuary	2	lots of wildlife, CMP
Lampang province	2	teak trees
Tham Rang Kam	1	cave, MHSP
Doi Chiang Dao cave	1	spiritual site in cave, CMP
Lampang	1	town with traditional horse carriages, Lampang province
Phumipol Dam	1	bordering Mae Rim NP, Tak province
Nam Bopi sinkhole	1	in MHSP
caving tour	1	in MHSP
Doi Sam Muen	1	CRP, unknown attraction
Lamphun province	1	unspecified attractions
Pha Sua waterfall	1	in MHSP
Chiang Dao NP	1	nature, CMP
butterfly and orchid farms	1	Mae Sa valley road, CMP
Wilderness Lodge	1	in MHSP
Lampang Wildlife Sanctuary	1	nature, Lampang province
Doi Pha Hom Pok	1	birds, in CMP
Mae Kung waterfall	1	in Wiang Kosai NP, Phrae and Lampang provinces
Mae Nam Kok	1	rafting on the river, CRP
Khun Kon waterfall	1	in CRP
Namtok Mae Surin NP	1	Doi Pui, trekking and hilltribes, MHSP
Mae Ma	1	viewpoint, unknown location
Banggan cave	1	in MHSP
Tong Ja Fang	1	royal project, flowers, remote, CRP
Doi Wa Wi	1	tea plants and hilltribes, CRP
Mae Sa elephant camp	1	elephant camp and rides, CMP
Huai Nam Pong	1	salt lick, birds, village, forests, MHSP
Mae Hat Animal Sanctuary	1	wildlife, CMP
Mae Tuen	1	unknown location, wildlife
Mae Yom NP	1	waterfall and teak forest, Phrae and Lampang provinces
Phae Meung Pi	1	Soil erosion and formations in Phrae province

Table 7.3 cont. Inventory of described sites, with frequency of occurrence and motive.

Province	*No. of sites in province*	*Total no. of province records (sum of occurrences of sites)*
Chiang Mai	22	187
Mae Hong Son	19	98
Chiang Rai	15	109
Lampang	7	21
Tak	4	11
Phrae	4	5
Sukhothai	2	5
Lamphun	2	3
Nan	2	5
Phayao	1	4

Table 7.4: Occurrence of attractions in the provinces of Northern Thailand.

were nature-based in their attraction. Many people described the whole province as being worth a visit for all reasons. One tour leader said, "All of Mae Hong Son Province is just an area to protect". The provinces with few mentions were often the ones favoured in light of low tourism, and could well see a growth in tourism as visitors seek out less developed and more traditional attractions (see section 2.4 for consideration of changing tourism patterns). Visitors with more time will perhaps venture further afield to visit the more remote provinces such as Tak, Nan and Phayao.

7.4.2 *Promotion: what and whether to promote*

Participants in this study were asked if they knew of any sites that maybe did not receive enough promotion, and how they think more promotion should be directed. A very interesting range of responses was obtained. While the expectation was for people to describe hidden wonders that they had found, this was not often the case. Table 7.5 lists those sites that people did think warranted more promotion.

Few new sites were described in this part of the study. The geological formations of Phrae province were the only notable addition to the inventory. Many suggestions were very general in nature, with people requesting more promotion and information about the overall natural forested beauty of the north. In Doi Inthanon National Park the feeling was that existing promotion centred on the summit of the mountain, yet the park could be promoted for so many other attractions. These include the Karen hilltribe of

Ban Sob Haad at a much lower elevation (further consideration is given to this topic in Chapter 8). Many requests for better general information, with better maps to help disperse visitors. It was the opinion of one respondent that the focus was on Chiang Mai Province, and that all other northern provinces would benefit from improved promotion. A visitor from Malaysia said, "Here there is more nature than Malaysia, but more people

Site or feature of the north	*province*	*occurrence*
Doi Inthanon National Park (birds, lower areas)	Chiang Mai	6
nature and ecosystems of north	general	4
Ob Luang National Park	Chiang Mai	4
waterfalls	general	3
Tham Lod (rafting, swifts, formation, local guides)	Mae Hong Son	3
sunflowers of Doi Mae Uko	Mae Hong Son	2
Mae Hong Son province (general, nature)	Mae Hong Son	2
Nan (Hom Chom)	Nan	2
hotsprings	general	2
Doi Chiang Dao Wildlife Sanctuary (birds)	Chiang Mai	2
Jae Son National Park	Lampang	2
Om Koi Wildlife Sanctuary	Chiang Mai	2
Montjong Wildlife Sanctuary	Chiang Mai	2
Doi Khuntan National Park	Lampang	2
favourable climate	general	1
flora	general	1
nature trails	general	1
Phrae (Sawa waterfall, Pae Meung Phi geology)	Phrae	1
Mae Kung waterfall	unknown	1
forested north	general	1
Chiang Rai Province mountains	Chiang Rai	1
Mae Sai (border, scenic beauty, cheap imports)	Chiang Rai	1
backcountry areas	general	1
Mae Kok river trips	Chiang Rai	1
rafting	general	1
ancient teak forests	Lampang	1
Lampang temples	Lampang	1
bird tours	general	1
archaeological sites	general	1
Doi Angkhan	Chiang Mai	1
Chiang Rai Province	Chiang Rai	1
northern mountains	general	1
Tak – all of the province	Tak	1

Table 7.5: Sites, attractions, or activities that respondents considered to be needing more promotion.

go there". Other comments related to the abundance of things to do, if only there was the time, and that there is so much still in the north that has yet to be surveyed for possible ecotourism opportunities.

Other responses to the issues of promotion related to the existing massive promotion of the north as interpreted by visitors. There were 68 comments relating to existing promotion or alternative approaches as to what should be promoted, as opposed to 57 where people described particular attractions needing more promotion. The commonest response, by 25 people, was that there is enough promotion already. As one visitor commented, "Northern Thailand is highly promoted already; if you take a walk in a street of Chiang Mai, what isn't promoted?" Others (6) indicated that promotion will lead to the destruction of those places as "problems follow people". One visitor said that it is better not to promote the places, since it is more of an adventure if tourists do not invade it, and another cautioned against advertising since it leads to exploitation and greed. Over-promotion was specifically mentioned for trekking in the north, and that "most are culture-adventure oriented". As an alternative to the regular trek offered by tour agencies, one respondent said that there was a need for more educational trips that combine work with tourism (see section 2.4.1 for an example). Promotion of ecotourism by the TAT was a bad idea for one person, who thought that mass tourism in sensitive sites would result.

Five respondents wanted correct and better information. They complained about time-wasting because of bad or inaccurate information, and promotion of attractions that no longer offered an authentic cultural tourism attraction. Four thought that there should be more promotion for the protection of old cultural traditions. Promotion of how to use places, good behaviour, cleanliness was stressed by ten people and eight said conservation, nature education and reforestation issues were more important to promote than new attractions. One visitor complained about problems for tourists, and thought that tourists should be better informed about begging and hilltribe villagers demanding money for photos. This practice (photos for money) is very common in Padaung (long-neck) hilltribe villages, a hilltribe that one individual thought received too much promotion.

Discussions with the TAT in Chiang Mai revealed a deep concern for attracting the right kind of tourist to nature-based attractions. They emphasized the need for education of Thais across the board, and of tourists to encourage proper and appropriate behaviour in sensitive areas, for example with respect to noise and garbage. The importance of the trekking agencies and their role in the organization and future development of ecotourism was stressed. It is the agencies that tend to seek out new destinations and routes. The TAT cautioned that these agencies, who must have a commercial benefit from running tours to survive, must think beyond their own benefits to help the country and its future in the long term. "The product needs to last long so the next generation can use it too". It was, however, the sentiments of one tour agency that the trekking industry is spiralling into decline, and that maybe it has only five years left of viability. Their pessimism related to the grab and greed attitude of most operators who seek short-term and immediate reward while it is there for the taking.

7.5 Trekking and tourism agencies

7.5.1 *What do trekking agencies offer?*

Over the period of one week I visited trekking agencies in the city of Chiang Mai in order to ascertain what they could offer me by way of treks that would suit my interests. Under the guise of a visitor interested in doing a trek, I stipulated that I wanted to experience the nature of Northern Thailand, like the wild animals, birds and wild flowers. In total, 41 trekking agencies were visited, some offered more than one trek option, and a return visit was made to one agency. I indicated that I was not necessarily interested in a trek immediately, but would rather plan for one in a few weeks. During the course of discussions I took notes about the details of the trek, and summarized these where possible. A full list of agencies visited and what they offered is given in Appendix C.

Agencies visited included those in the central regions of the city operating exclusively as a tour agency, but also those set up as a sideline to guest houses. A number of key features characterized treks on offer. These were drawn from sightseeing expectations as described by the trekking agent. They included wildlife, hilltribes, waterfalls, rafting or boating, orchid and butterfly farms, elephant riding, hotsprings, and caves. Further to the introduction offered by the agent, I then asked if they offered any treks in national parks or other protected areas.

Only three agencies offered tours that I considered special interest ecotours incorporating wildlife watching as a primary focus or possibility. Not one agency was advertizing itself as an "ecotour" company, although two agencies had used the word green in their name. One of these was an agency offering tours that I considered to be ecotours. Assessment for such a label was based on the natural component of the tour or trek, the sensitivity afforded to local people, the origin of the guides employed for the trek and the interpretive information on offer during the tour. Most agencies offered a standard package of cultural adventure tourism. When pressed to describe the natural content of the trek it amounted to forests or "jungle". All guides were described as being highly knowledgeable about wildlife, and about this I am extremely sceptical, since my feeling was that they were trying to sell the trek by whatever means possible. Only one agency said outright that they could not offer this, adding that nobody does that kind of tour here. One agency had a sign offering an "eco-trek". This trek they did not offer when first approached, and on further questioning they still did not want to offer it.

One of the three agencies had not done a tour of the type requested in over two years, and made it known that it would be a lot of hard work to try to arrange and seemed very unenthusiastic. This agency did offer a two-day birding tour in Doi Inthanon National Park. The other two were more enthusiastic, but also pointed out that these requests were not so common. Chiang Mai Green Trekking and Tour Co. was in the process of launching a new style of trek satisfying most requirements for ethical ecotourism conduct. The Trekking Collective did not believe that "ecotourism" could even exist as a sustainable activity, and therefore refused to use the label for this kind of trek.

When trekking agencies were asked about protected areas, especially national parks, there was a considerable lack of knowledge about their location. Thirteen agencies said they offered treks in protected areas, and eleven of these were in Doi Inthanon National Park. Many agencies offered tours that did in fact pass through protected areas, and of this they were unaware.

Among the popular destinations for treks was Mae Taeng north of Chiang Mai. Agents described this area as being "non-touristic", good for jungle and orchid and butterfly farms. That many agencies were offering frequent tours to the same region raises the question of just how non-touristic it is. Other sites described as being good for forests and general wildlife were Mae Hong Son and Tak. Many treks passed through Chiang Rai province and had a heavy focus on the Golden Triangle.

Promotional advertising along the sidewalks had one dominant feature of the "jungle trek". For the most part this trek was a one day trek to see some hilltribes, do a short stretch of river rafting, an elephant ride and visit the orchid and butterfly farms. This kind of trek was also marketed as a "safari trek". The content of the treks poorly reflects the title, and emphasizes the dangers of promotional and misleading advertizing.

Strong relationships were built with two agencies – Chiang Mai Green Trekking and Tour Co. (Jonggon Duangsri) and The Trekking Collective (Caroline and Chaiyan Subkeaw). A trek was undertaken with both agencies, and is further discussed in section 7.6.

While spending time with and in discussion with Miss Jonggon, three separate parties who came into the agency offered a visitor's perspective on the frustrations in dealing with trekking agencies. A retired British couple came in expressing their disappointment with what was on offer by trekking agencies. What they sought was a multifaceted trip, specifically without an elephant ride, involving sensitive cultural tourism but with a heavy emphasis on nature. Miss Jonggon was able to offer this kind of tour, a new venture for her company, and the clients were "ecstatic" that something like this was possible. The full nature of this trek is described in Chapter 8. A party of three Europeans was also interested in a tour, again specifically without an elephant ride, and with a culturally sensitive approach. (37 out of 46 treks offered to me included an elephant ride). A solo traveller, fed up with the heavy sales approach of most agencies, was relieved to find a range of treks on offer to her here that were more suited to her interests and without the pressure of participation.

In discussion with tourists in Chiang Mai, it was established that trekking agencies are beginning to acquire a reputation for pressurizing visitors into participating in a trek. This was especially noted by The Trekking Collective who said that they frequently deal with distraught visitors in their office, visitors who have been driven from their accommodation by angry guesthouse owners. These owners are upset because they have been insisting that the visitors do a trek with their agency, since "that is why everybody comes to Chiang Mai'. The Trekking Collective has often helped such visitors by arranging more favourable and friendly accommodations elsewhere. Such a reputation, if it spreads and as long as there are so many agencies hankering after the tourists for business, will damage the reputation of the industry and the city.

7.5.2 *The Tourism Authority of Thailand*

A similar visit was made to the Chiang Mai office of the TAT, and information regarding ecotourism activities and national parks was requested. On the subject of ecotourism the representative said that there was no such thing as ecotourism in Northern Thailand. I was given a general tourism brochure when asking about national parks. In this they indicated that there were two attractions in national parks. I could either visit Wat Prathart Doi Suthep, the temple situated in Doi Suthep-Pui National Park, or I could make a trip out to Doi Inthanon National Park. In the brochure issued, this was the only park specifically mentioned and pointed out to me, and is described as forested and mountainous with lichens and wild orchids. In addition a map of the park was given to me.

Other natural attractions were also described in the brochure, but were not brought to my attention, nor was any mention made of the national parks of which they make up a part. Such attractions were the waterfalls of Doi Inthanon (given separate entries to the park itself), Ob Luang gorge in Ob Luang National Park, Mae Sa waterfall and other attractions in Doi Suthep-Pui National Park. There were also references to other natural attractions such as hotsprings and caves.

The information provided by the TAT was extremely limited in content and range. No information was passed on about provinces beyond Chiang Mai. As an afterthought the representative did mention that I might want to check out Chiang Mai Green Trekking and Tour Co. nearby since they thought this agency might be offering some appropriate trekking for my interests. This is one of the few agencies I found catering to the interests of ecotourists. A registered list of trekking agencies was given to me to supplement this information.

7.6 Personal observations

In addition to the sites where interviews were conducted, a number of other sites were visited. These sites and the research emphasis are listed below (Table 7.6). Each one is given individual consideration from my personal thoughts and observations. My

Name	***Province***	***Category***	***open-ended survey***	***interviews***	***trail use, hiking etc.***	***trek, tour or show***
Ban Pong Royal Project	CM	University project		*	*	
Chiang Mai Zoo	CM	Zoological Garden			*	
Doi Chiang Dao	CM	Wildlife Sanctuary			*	*
Doi Inthanon	CM	National Park	*	*	*	*
Doi Khuntan	LG	National Park	*	*	*	
Doi Suthep-Pui	CM	National Park	*	*	*	
Elephant Conservation Centre	LG	(tourist attraction)				*
Elephant ride	MHS	(tourist attraction)		*		*
Forest Plantation	name and location withheld				*	*
Huai Nam Pong	MHS	village		*	*	
Jae Son	LG	National Park	*	*	*	
Lum Nam Pai	MHS	Wildlife Sanctuary				
Namtok Mae Surin	MHS	National Park		*	*	
Ob Luang	CM	National Park	*	*	*	
Orchid-Butterfly farms	CM	(tourist attraction)				
Queen Sirikit Botanical Gardens	CM	Botanical Gardens		*	*	
Snake Farm	CM	(tourist attraction)				*
Sri Lanna	CM	National Park				
Tham Lod Forest Park	MHS	Forest Park	*	*	*	*
Tham Mae Lanna	MHS	(tourist attraction)				*
Tham Pla	MHS	(tourist attraction)				
Wiang Kosai	P	National Park			*	

Table 7.6: Sites visited for research purposes with research activities undertaken at sites; personal observations made at all sites (Provinces: CM = Chiang Mai, LG = Lampang, MHS = Mae Hong Son, P = Phrae; Exact location of Forest Plantation withheld at the request of The Trekking Collective).

comments are based on my understanding of and perceptions about ecotourism and natural areas, with consideration given to the opinions of respondents and other participants in this study previously described in earlier chapters.

7.6.1 *Ban Pong Royal Project*

Maejo University is currently developing a site near the university and close to the city of Chiang Mai that is planned for ecotourism and education purposes. With the full interest of various departments in the university, this deciduous dry forest has an excellent chance of becoming a good site for nature interpretation. While still a young site, the TAT would be foolish to start promoting it until the site is ready. Readiness of the site would be best brought about by the addition of clear trails, maps, interpretive signs. Participation of students involved in the ecotourism and landscape architecture curriculums would be an appropriate training ground for the provision of interpretive services and natural area management.

The site is unusual in being a lowland valley forest, of which there is very little left. The forest has a unique feel to it, with fascinating floral attributes. The gently rolling site would make a good recreational site once a decent trail network is mapped out, and could be developed with multipurpose trails for bikes and hikers, provided clear designation of trails exists. The forest might become part of a larger network of forest attractions, given that the diversity of Northern Thailand's remaining forest ecosystems is one of the region's greatest assets.

The TAT is working on promoting this site, and it was the subject of discussion during interviews with the TAT office in Chiang Mai. The site emphasizes one clear point, that promotion of sites for ecotourism activities should not be undertaken until the site is set up to cater for special interest tourism, and until clear management directives are in place to cope with visitation. Over-promotion ahead of time could seriously compromise the long-term viability of a site as an ecotourist attraction.

7.6.2 *Chiang Mai Zoo*

Chiang Mai Zoo boasts an unrivalled location on the edge of the city and within easy reach by public transport. It is also situated adjacent to Doi Suthep-Pui National

Park. In recent years a number of new developments have made fine additions to the zoo, such as the large aviary. This aviary is a fully enclosed section of forest into which many birds are free to fly and nest. The birds are a mixture of native and exotic species. The gently rolling landscaped gardens are attractive to walk around but some of the other attractions are devastating. The zoo can for the most part be described as an older version as was once popular in North America, but now largely altered due to public pressure following the unpopular images of caged animals in poor conditions. A tiger was emaciated and pacing back and forth in a small cage, smaller wild cats and bears were kept in small and filthy quarters. Many animals exhibited signs of stress from their conditions, either by way of their appearance or through repetitive and aggressive behaviour.

The zoo definitely represents the old and new schools of zoo-keeping. While it continues to retain so many attractions that devastated me, I imagine it will be hard to earn a good reputation. But its potential as a central point and launch for nature-based tourism in Northern Thailand is excellent, especially if themes around native wildlife were developed for visitors. Interpretive features on native wildlife would also educate city residents, and possibly help conservation initiatives and awareness.

The existing focus is for people's enjoyment and not education. Observation of visitor behaviour demonstrated a lack of respect for wildlife. Visitors were observed throwing bananas directly at a malayan sunbear, throwing vegetation at a chimpanzee and taunting it until it ran for cover, and tormenting a clouded leopard through the caging. With over half a million visitors in 1994 (information obtained from the Zoological Park Organization in Bangkok) the zoo has the potential to reach and influence many people and possibly change such behaviour. The recent opening of the aquarium is one big step in the right direction, with examples of endangered Thai species of fish. However, some fish were in terribly poor condition. A lot of effort had been made to have huge and impressive fish. One rare and large freshwater stingray was housed in a tank barely bigger than the length of the fish, which had evidently suffered from abrasive injuries from the small tank size. On questioning zoo employees about this, I was told that the fish does not need lots of space because it does not move around very much. Even the new exhibits certainly represent a diversity of fairness and respect for wildlife.

Staff at the zoo indicated an interest in ecotourism and are considering setting up bird guide training programs. The zoo boasts a number of animals that are Thai, and some of which are endangered. Among the special animals indigenous to Thailand that the zoo boasted having were the pileated gibbon, asian golden cat, the leopard, fea's muntjac, serow, tapir, bangteng, clouded leopard, goral and sarus crane.

Neighbouring attractions

South of the zoo but still adjacent to the national park is the Open Zoo nature and Wildlife Education Centre. This has a primary mandate to educate Thai children about endangered wildlife of Thailand. They also have a tourism proposal but no budget. Generally poorly maintained (probably because of a very low operating budget) the site does have some potential for showing some endangered species. It also serves as an animal hospice to which confiscated and injured wild animals are brought. A large open area adjacent to the park has numerous deer roaming in it as part of the open zoo. The key attraction of this zoo might be the goral, an endangered goat-like antelope of mountainous country and very hard to see. It exists only in a few places in Northern Thailand.

Also at the foot of Doi Suthep and adjacent to the open zoo is Wat Umong (Temple of the Cave). This large Buddhist enclave has a small network of trails through forests that team with birds and wildlife like deer and squirrels. The feeling is one of a nature sanctuary where wildlife is happy to live in coexistence with man (although a Canadian monk showed me the legacy of a severe goring by one such harmonious deer). Such Buddhist sanctuaries could be used to promote the values of the Buddhist philosophy and connectedness with nature. A PR officer at Ob Luang National Park was firmly of the opinion that the Buddhist teachings for conservation should be the basic theme behind conservation of all areas in Thailand. He was highly critical of the government's desire to follow the western model to the end. His belief was that villagers and tourists would have higher respect for nature given this emphasis, than if they were told what not to do by a park ranger. This was also seen to be an excellent recommendation by park rangers in Doi Suthep-Pui National Park. Given the very common association of natural places with Buddhist associations, this would be a very highly recommended avenue to explore and educate, for both Thais and foreigners, and could be the basis for another theme around which to build tours.

7.6.3 *Doi Chiang Dao Wildlife Sanctuary – a trekking experience*

A three-day trek was arranged with Chiang Mai Green Trekking and Tour. The party included three foreign visitors (including myself), the chief guide (Jonggon Duangsri from the company), a local guide from Chiang Dao and two porters. This trek was not only done to determine the activities of one of the better tour agencies, but also to compare management of wildlife sanctuaries with national parks.

Under the government's mandate for protected areas (as described by Snidvongs 1988), the purpose of wildlife sanctuaries is to preserve and protect wildlife and wildlife habitat from human activity. Royal Forestry Department (RFD) policy limits tourism to a few hectares with nature education exhibits. Some visits undertaken in wildlife sanctuaries "are allowed outside Nature Education Centres under close supervision of sanctuary personnel" (Snidvongs 1988:7). The role of these areas then suggests an extremely restricted educational one.

Our guide was sure that there would not be a problem getting in to the park, even though we had only given them a day's notice of our arrival. At the checkpoint we presented National Research Council identification to indicate our intentions to enter the park as researchers. Without an accompanying letter from the RFD showing our intent, they would not let us enter the sanctuary. However, Miss Jonggon then requested that we be let in as tourists, and this they were very happy with. As researchers "they were not happy for us to see what has been going on in the sanctuary". As tourists, we became eligible for entry. The ease of entry as a tourist astonished me, given the described mandate of wildlife sanctuaries.

There are no facilities on the mountain once the last ranger accommodations are passed. The trek began with hikes through evergreen and pine forest. For the first night we camped in pine forest. Here it was very obvious that many previous campers had spent the night. Large old trees had been hacked away at the trunks, and scorched by fire (see Photo 7.1, p125). Some looked so damaged that the long-term health of the tree looked severely compromised. Evidently all campers (including us) used wood from the limited resources available. There was also plenty of garbage to be seen, notably toilet paper almost everywhere. Despite the immediate damage to the trees, the forests were very attractive and varied, and bird life was exceptionally diverse and easy to see compared to other sites.

At higher elevations on day 2, the trees had all been cleared a long time ago by hilltribes, and two opium poppy fields were still being cultivated. Occasional patches of trees harboured many species of birds, but there was a notable lack of other wildlife. In my experience with butterflies, I was expecting to see a rich diversity on this mountain, but there were very few individuals at all. Our local guide commented that it had been this way for ten years, back to a time when Japanese collectors raided the mountain until there were none left. He now said that the Japanese no longer come because they know there are none left.

Towards the summit of the limestone massif, climate and flora are very different. The geographical location of the mountain and its elevation (2175 m) has resulted in anumber of unusual endemic species confined strictly to the summit area. These include a palm tree (see Photo 7.2, p.125) and the only species of rhododendron that can tolerate limey soils. Near the summit the natural amphitheatres created by the mountains are perfect for distributing bird songs for great distances.

The descent on the day 3 is characterized by dense evergreen forest that gradually gives way to secondary bamboo forests. There was very fresh evidence of illegal tree harvesting at lower elevations (see Photo 7.3, p.125), but here there were still macaques to be seen.

The most notable damage inflicted on the sanctuary recently occurred two weekends before this trek, when a large group of people of several hundred was involved in an organized trek to the summit. Undesignated campsites were cut and left considerable damage, campfires were filled with garbage, and many pieces of paper, especially toilet paper, were strewn about. Towards the summit area the remains of two birds were found by a fire, one of which was identified as the Grey-headed Parrotbill

Photo 7.1: Campers damage to trees through cuts and fire, Doi Chiang Dao Wildlife Sanctuary.

Photo 7.2: An endemic palm tree, only found on the summit of Doi Chiang Dao.

Photo 7.3: Illegal tree harvesting on the lower slopes of Doi Chiang Dao Wildlife Sanctuary

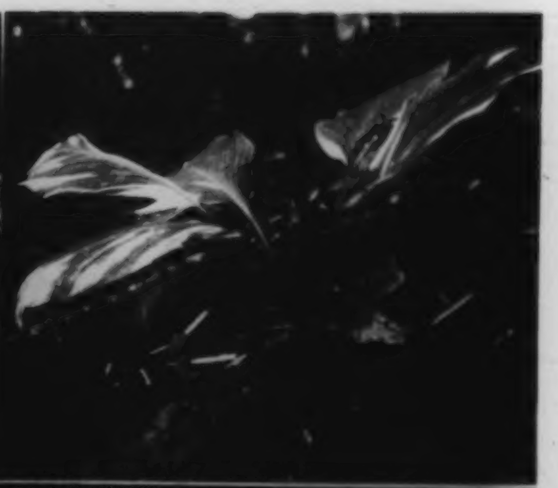

Photo 7.4 above: bamboo groves, one of many forest types in Doi Khuntan National Park; **Photo 7.7 below:** garbage disposal at the summit of Doi Khuntan is a serious problem.

Photo 7.5 top: a diversity of gingers grow in the understorey of forests in Doi Khuntan National Park; **Photo 7.6 above:** open meadows in this park are prolific with flowers and ideal for butterfly watching; **Photo 7.8 below:** arrival at the railway station lends considerable appeal to this park.

(*Paradoxornis gularis*), a bird confined to a few mountainous regions of Northern Thailand.

7.6.4 *Doi Inthanon National Park*

Given the emphasis placed on this site for tourism, and the majority of research participants recommending the park for ecotourism, a full consideration of this park, including my personal observations, is given in Chapter 8.

7.6.5 *Doi Khuntan National Park*

Harder to access, and lacking the conventional mass tourism attractions common in other national parks, this forested national park possibly represents one of the ideal nature-based attractions in the region. Given the access (by train and hiking only) and lack of conventional attractions, few visitors visit the park. An extensive network of forest trails disperses visitors well, and there is an enormous diversity of forest types through which to hike (see Photo 7.4, p.126). Forests, flora and birds are the key attractions, and insects like giant millipedes and butterflies were very common (see Photos 7.5 and 7.6, p.126). A small number of historical attractions lends an additional appeal, including a World War II historical site, and a small past-president's home. The main incentive to hike up the mountain would be the panorama from the cool summit, with extensive views into Chiang Mai and Lampang provinces.

Trails for the most part were very good, although the key negative impact throughout the park was garbage. Despite low visitation, the park has managed to accumulate plenty of garbage. Particularly noticeable are the empty plastic water bottles left along trails. At the summit, the problem was even worse, since the site is used for picnicking. Two bins were placed there for garbage disposal. These were full, uncovered, and inappropriate to the location (see Photo 7.7, p.126). A much better approach would be to have no bins, and have a bring-your-garbage-out policy. One of the key sources of garbage was the small store by the park headquarters. Tins and packets bought from this store were left at the summit. Some attempts to make fires at the summit had been made, and in these there was also much garbage. Nearby the park

Photo 7.9 above: Wat Prathart Doi Suthep - an important attraction of the north; **Photo 7.10 below:** tall Dipterocarp trees are a highlight of Doi Suthep-Pui National Park

Photo 7.11 top: an enormous fig tree is accessible to visitors to the park; **Photo 7.12 above:** endemic species are found in the park such as this endangered turtle (Phulu); **Photo 7.13 below:** ancient spiritual sites are hidden highlights of Doi Suthep-Pui National Park.

headquarters there was also a garbage disposal problem. A ravine, partially shielded by shrubs, had become the dumping site for all refuse generated at the headquarters.

The romantic arrival at a small railway station by Thailand's longest tunnel (see Photo 7.8, p.126), the hike into the park, and the extensive and beautiful forests distinguish this park from others. It makes an ideal one-day visit from the city for nature enthusiasts, and the diversity of forest ensures a great diversity of birds can be seen in this park. With a few simple changes in some management practices for garbage control, and a continuation of the friendly greeting from visitor centre staff, this could easily become one of the ecotourism highlights, and for me was one of the most significant and beautiful places visited.

7.6.6 *Doi Suthep-Pui National Park*

Currently the most advertised focus in this park is the temple (see Photo 7.9. p.128). Also well known are the royal palace and the Hmong hilltribes. What seems to be the forgotten heritage of this park is the nature itself. Fine, tall Dipterocarp trees grace the hillsides (see Photo 7.10, p.128), birds and butterflies are profuse, and a beautiful nature trail is there to be used. Close to the headquarters is an enormous fig tree (*Ficus* sp.) with an enormous rooted trunk (see Photo 7.11, p.128). It is these key natural features of the park that could further promote the park for its natural beauty, a significant reason why the park was established in the first place. The park hosts rarities and specialties. A rare and endemic turtle (see Photo 7.12, p.128) and salamander can be found, the world's largest moth (*Attacus atlas*) reportedly resides in the park, seasonal emergences of butterflies celebrate the park's diversity, as do the rare and beautiful *Sappria* flowers – a terrestrial parasite and one of the world's larger flowers. The park also once boasted a fine display of orchids – in 1965 250 species were recorded, but today only 153 species can still be found (Apawackurat pers. comm.).

In addition to natural diversity and beauty, the spiritual history of the site is very significant. Once perceived as the land of holy spirits, the foothills of the park hosted many temples most of which have since been abandoned and forgotten. It is still possible to visit some sites, such as the ruins near the Dhammanaat Foundation office near the entrance to the park (see Photo 7.13, p.128). The archaeological and spiritual heritage (aside from the main temple) could also be celebrated.

One of the key frustrations as a visitor to this park is the lack of information about the natural attractions of the park and trails system. Persistence and detective work is required in order to establish that any trails exist in the park. The other is the heavy visitation the temple site receives, and the commercial set up nearby. The heavy traffic and fumes are a disappointing addition to the park, and result from the new road. Even during the planning of road improvements, it was the perception of visitors that no more development and access was necessary for the park, and yet it went ahead (Elliott 1992). However, once a few minutes away from these heavy use areas, the park is extremely peaceful and a joy to visit.

7.6.7 *Lampang Elephant Conservation Centre*

A number of elephant camps are promoted in the region. Many of these are tourist set ups designed to make profit. There is one, however, that has a different mandate, and raises money for the protection and help of wild and domestic elephants. While still providing shows for tourists, the money raised is directed to an elephant hospital that rehabilitates abused and sick domestic elephants. Other money is used to support 'retired' and unwanted elephants. The Centre is working towards a major proposal to set up a semi-wild area into which retired and other elephants can be released. Cooperation of the government and suitable land are both being sought.

Given the range of motives behind the operation of elephant camps (from money to conservation), the TAT should be promoting this Centre in its future ecotourism projects. The goals of the Centre are entirely in the interests of the elephants, and yet local people are still employed to help run the camp and hospital.

7.6.8 *Elephant ride – a Mae Hong Son experience*

Elephant rides are heavily promoted as an attraction in Northern Thailand. Near Mae Hong Son I went on an elephant ride to see what was involved and to speak with the Mahout. The two-hour ride was in fact expensive and arduous, and the elephant was rebellious and frustrated, frequently wanting to feed and drink rather than walk. The

Mahout indicated that this was not his elephant, and that it was owned by a city man. This man had a dozen elephants in total. The Mahout was employed by the owner to look after the elephant and provide rides, but was employed only on a rotation basis with other Mahouts. He used the riding job as a way of supplementing his income from farming.

There are many ways of ownership and income generated from elephants in Northern Thailand. Historically used for logging, this activity is now illegal, and the owners of elephants have had to shift their emphasis and use of elephants to something else – tourism. Given the popularity of elephant rides among foreign visitors, there is now considerable money to be made, which has led to scenarios such as this one, where a city man owns several elephants, and farmers ride them for a second job. It was the suggestion of one visitor that the elephants might not in fact enjoy this experience or treatment when being ridden, and that a far better way to employ elephants would be to do treks with an elephant as a porter of gear rather than people. In my experience, this would be much more comfortable and enjoyable.

7.6.9 *Forest Plantation – a wildlife watching trek*

A wildlife-watching trek was arranged with The Trekking Collective based in Chiang Mai. The exact location of this trek has been withheld at the request of the trekking agency. Their fear was that if the site became public knowledge, then a rush of unregulated tourism could jeopardize the future sustainability of the site. Wildlife-watching was the key component of the trek as arranged, in order to determine if the opinions of many visitors was in fact correct, that there were no large animals left to be seen in Northern Thailand.

The four-day trek was arranged to a remote part of Northern Thailand's border country. The area to be explored was in fact a forest plantation, with mixed areas of scrub and open fields. Day and night watches were arranged, and were successful. An interesting diversity of larger wildlife was seen, including barking deer, flying lemurs and slow loris. In addition wild dogs were heard very close by, and tracks of banteng, various wild cats, deer and other animals were seen. One day was spent tracking a herd of elephants. During this time a large group of wild boar forced two guides up a tree, and a lot of very fresh evidence of the elephants was seen. The herd itself just managed to avoid detection. Reports were also occasionally made about tigers in the region. Many species of birds were seen here that I had not seen previously.

The trek was sensibly handled in that all goods for use during the trek were brought in, and all waste was taken out. No wood was cut for the plantation for fires, portable gas being used instead. The site clearly proved that there are still sites in the north where large wild animals can be seen. Most interesting was that this was in fact a plantation and not primary forest. This also gives hope that given reforestation practices, as maybe large wildlife will be willing to return to other denuded parts of Thailand. Staff at the site indicated that this was the first time they had seen foreign visitors in over two years, and that they were delighted that we had come to share in their wildlife.

7.6.10 Huai Nam Pong

This village is located in Pan Mapha District in Mae Hong Son Province. I was taken here by a development group based in Ban Soppong. The village, poor and agricultural, has been interested in welcoming new and alternative sources of income, and has expressed an interest in ecotourism activities. The villagers are from the Lava tribe, and have become Christian. Clean and tidy, they are mostly a subsistence-based economy. The village is nestled in non-hunting and sanctuary areas that prohibit them from hunting almost entirely. The key attractions of the village are open fields to which the rare wild peacocks can be seen feeding and courting, and a salt lick at which deer and wild cats have been seen. In addition many birds come down to the salt lick. The site is set in beautiful deciduous forest and can make a fascinating detour. A discrete hide could easily be erected so that wildlife can feed in peace. Around the edge of the lick tracks of barking deer were evident. A flock of Vernal Hanging Parrots came down to the lick during my visit.

As well as wildlife, ecotourism attractions could incorporate education about the village's agricultural lifestyle (see Photos 7.14 and 7.15, p.133). Some interviewees expressed an interest in learning about rice, of which they could see plenty in the region's valleys, and about which they knew nothing. The charming setting and strong

Photo 7.14 top left: a villager of Huai Nam-Pong weaves a traditional style fence; **Photo 7.15 left:** agricultural practices such as rice cultivation can add to the draw for potential ecotourism activities.

Photo 7.16 below: Jae Son National Park has compromised the beauty of the hotsprings with conspicuous bins in the middle of the attraction.

Photo 7.17 top right: Tham Mae Lanna boasts marvellous limestone formations.

and traditional agricultural discipline of this village could be an additional draw for tourism.

The natural and cultural elements of the village represent an ideal opportunity for two new approaches to tourism and ecotourism to Northern Thailand. Diversification is a key element to the long-term sustainability of tourism to the region, and for the potential to attract tourists to remote locations such as at Huai Nam Pong. In addition, the benefits of ecotourism would be made more widespread if the focus of such activities was on small locations that are not necessarily within national parks or other protected areas. Here, the villagers have recently been severely limited by the government's desire to put most of the land around them under some protected status. To substitute lost income and help in conservation initiatives, the advent of ecotourism to such sites could be the saving grace of the village and to the success of a wildlife sanctuary.

7.6.11 *Jae Son National Park*

Jae Son conforms to the typical format of parks in Northern Thailand, with a road straight to the main attractions, and very little access or information about other activities possible in the park. The theme for the park is one of recreation, mainly in the form of picnicking. The hotsprings provide an interesting opportunity to inform and educate, but there is nothing available for this. The spring beds have been violated in two ways. First and most noticeable are the bins that have been placed on the walkway. These large black bins become the feature of the springs (see Photo 7.16, p.133). It is seen as necessary, in order to combat garbage problems, to have as many bins as possible - but this simply does not work. Education and regulation may be a much better approach. Second, the walkway has been laid in concrete right through the middle of the springs, doubtless spoiling many of the natural formations and algal growths. Some parts of this path branch off to form loops. Inside this loop a deeper hole has been excavated exclusively for the purpose of boiling eggs.

There is distinct feeling that this park, surrounded by forested hills, could have so much more to offer given some exploration and inventorying. For the time being it has become a popular site for boiling eggs and picnicking by the waterfall.

7.6.12 *Lum Nam Pai Wildlife Sanctuary*

Tham Lod Forest Park is the educational centre that belongs in part in Lum Nam Pai Wildlife Sanctuary. The natural scenery of this sanctuary is outstanding, and it hosts rare species such as the mountain-loving goral. A discussion was overheard between the director of the sanctuary and others. He was describing the problems he has with the local people. They harvest logs illegally from the sanctuary, and as a consequence of regulations imposed on them, the villagers hate the director. There are only two park rangers protecting an enormous area. The director's frustrations were that he had to solve the problem in seven months before he moved to another post. This highlights two problems that exist for many protected areas. Firstly, that residents of the area often cause some of the greatest problems. Instead of working with the villagers, management is constantly working against them. It is in instances like this that the villagers are evidently searching for alternative incomes, and perhaps it is here that ecotourism has a role to play. The practicalities of trying to create a strictly regulated, protectionist-driven park in such populated areas may be counter-productive. Current management policies match the IUCN's category I protected area designation as a strict nature reserve or scientific reserve (WCMC and IUCN 1994), but Thailand's wildlife sanctuaries are listed by the IUCN under the category IV designation, perhaps as a result of the naming of these protected areas. New management policies in line with a category IV managed nature reserve or wildlife sanctuary, as described by the IUCN, may be more appropriate and command greater cooperation from the community. The actual management of these sanctuaries is questionable, given my experiences in Doi Chiang Dao Wildlife Sanctuary (section 7.6.3). The option of sustainable ecotourism may help solve some of the internal difficulties in protected area such as Lum Nam Pai Wildlife Sanctuary.

The second problem this case highlights is the constant change in management. The director of the Open Zoo in Chiang Mai hinted at the difficulties experienced from the head of the RFD down. Changes result from internal politics and benefits seeking, and that directors of certain parks or sanctuaries are not in it for the love of the land but for the love of benefits. A short term posting as a director of a wildlife sanctuary can move on to something bigger and better. The director of the Open Zoo pointed out that the head of the RFD had changed five times in the last year.

7.6.13 *Namtok Mae Surin National Park*

A brief visit was made to this park in Mae Hong Son province. Initially we were invited to stay for up to a week, but after the first interview this was suddenly cut back to one night. Just why this happened is not known, since no sensitive material was knowingly requested during the interview, but the reaction would suggest that something had gone wrong. Aside from some rich birdlife (notably woodpeckers) and scenery, little can be made by way of assessment on this park. The ranger interviewed said that the highlights were the waterfall and the sunflowers on Doi Mae Uko. However, neither of these falls within the boundaries of the park. He did indicate that the park had numerous hilltribe villages and represented a good blend of nature and culture. It was hard for a visitor to determine just where the park began and ended, and where visitors should go if they wished to explore the park. When asked to mark the park boundaries on a map, the ranger did not know where they were, further adding to the mystery.

From here it was my intention to visit Salawin National Park on the border with Burma (Myanmar). However, at that time border conflicts had spilled over into the park, and it was closed to all visitors.

7.6.14 *Ob Luang National Park*

As with Jae Son National Park, the key attractions are confined to a small area. In this immediate area the attractions are unique, diverse and fascinating. Attempts at good interpretation have been made. Scenically attractive, the forests surrounding the site are young regrowth forests that have grown since the areas was logged a number of years ago. This may account for why there are no birds to be seen or heard in the park, coupled with the almost continuous roar of trucks labouring their way up the steep hill through the valley and close to the tourist attractions.

In the visitor centre there was an interpretive sign on ecotourism. The sign described ecotourism as having less or no impact on the environment and culture, with interpretation to increase knowledge, and local participation and benefits in its operation and decision-making. Where the latter categories of local involvement and benefits fit in to this park were hard to determine. While hilltribes live in the park, they have not yet been incorporated into the tourism attractions or plans for the park. The impression was that there are many more attractions that could be on offer in this park, but for the time being efforts were being solely made at the main attraction. The major and recent developments towards ecotourism in the park bode well for the future, and given appropriate surveying and plans, this park could well become an interesting site to visit. The area was designated as a park as recently as 1991.

7.6.15 *Orchid and butterfly farms*

The orchid and butterfly farms of the Mae Sa valley road are a common component of "safari treks" offered by trekking agencies in Chiang Mai. While the houses offered beautiful displays of orchids, the information about the "farms" was extremely limited. There were no names for the orchids on display. The houses appeared to be set up for display only. The butterfly farms were similarly managed. In the covered area only two species were seen in abundance, one of which was the Golden Birdwing. The farm seem more interested in selling pinned specimens as souvenirs, and showing off the racks of hatching Atlas moths that are killed for these souvenirs. Again no information was offered. Given Thailand's tremendous diversity in both butterflies and orchids, the displays and information provided were very disappointing. This could be a perfect opportunity to celebrate and interpret Thailand's rich natural heritage, and unless efforts towards this are made, then the site really holds little draw for ecotourists. For butterfly watching, a far more fulfilling experience can be had in the forest canopy of Doi Suthep-Pui, and orchids are prolific in Doi Inthanon.

7.6.16 *Queen Sirikit Botanical Gardens*

These gardens are located along the edges of Doi Suthep-Pui National Park, and are very beautifully set. Although very young, expansion of collections and shows is rapid, and this site is close to becoming a rich site for education and orientation. While initially the emphasis is on Thai flora, an international focus is planned for the future. For botanical enthusiasts, this site is a must, and provides a fascinating introduction into the flora of Thailand. Outstanding exhibits include the fern, palm and banana gardens. The gardens also have an excellent potential for interpretive services.

7.6.17 *Mae Sa Valley Snake Farm*

Snakes have long had a bad reputation, and the snake farm exploits the "terrifying" image of snakes. As a person who is interested in reptiles of all shapes and sizes, the treatment of the snakes at this farm was devastating. During the snake show, large snakes, some indigenous to Thailand, were whipped around and treated with the least of respect. The intention was to thrill the audience, and to impress with the antics of the hosts with venomous snakes. Occasionally interesting tidbits of information were offered, but it did not lessen the impact of the way the snakes were treated. I could not recommend this to anybody with a passion for snakes. The chances of the show's emphasis changing in future years is probably limited, given the world's alarmist reaction to snakes and the tourism potential of such a show. I cannot condone such a show.

The show's disappointment was slightly offset by the displays of snakes in aquariums. Some interesting species were displayed for observation, and some had names to the cages. While some snakes had excellent conditions, others were very poorly kept. A reticulated python was kept in a small glass aquarium with a bowl of water and nothing else. Much like the orchid gardens, this farm could be a place to celebrate Thailand's natural heritage, rather than abuse it, and could be an excellent site to offer interpretation.

Some larger animals were also kept at the site, including a gibbon. This gibbon was tied up on a short chain, and could not escape the attentions of tourists. Once again the behaviour of the tourists was observed, and the gibbon was being harassed and an attempt to feed it chips eventually forced it into hiding in its small kennel. It seems that both here and at the zoo, little honour is afforded to Thailand's wildlife.

7.6.18 *Sri Lanna National Park*

A brief recreational visit was made to this park, the main focus of which is a dam and resort. In *National Parks of Thailand* (Gray *et al* 1994) the park is described for its general beauty, and worth visiting to take a trip on the dam to enjoy the scenery. It also describes a cave and waterfall. Tourism management at the resort is limited. All waste enters the dam and people also swim in these waters. Given the site's popularity for overnight parties, the long term health of the water might be in question, and alternative waste disposal may be needed to replace the dated perception that a lake is a bottomless pit into which all waste can be constantly discarded.

7.6.19 *Tham Lod Forest Park*

This site represents one of the best ecotourism sites visited. The location is remote and scenic; the cave offers exceptional geological viewing; the recreational experience of rafting through the cave is unique; the archaeological history is fascinating; there is interesting wildlife for the viewing. Approximately 2000 visitors a month are serviced by 70 local guides (from the neighbouring Shan tribe village) who work on rotation to give an even distribution of the income. Money raised is also fed into village development and site management. The site is generally clean and well managed and limited signs offer some interpretation. Around the site limestone hills make for fascinating hiking and birdwatching.

Most of the management issues I noted were adequately addressed in Chapter 6 section 6.3.2. One further addition is the need for the guides to be aware that they should not touch the prehistoric art in the cave. Already damaged by ill-advised cleaning when it was first discovered, the guide touched the painting extensively while pointing it out to the group.

Tham Lod highlights the outstanding geological and natural attributes of the province of Mae Hong Son. The limestone mountains have led to the formation of prolific caves and interesting scenery. Much of the area's heritage is best explored from Cave Lodge run by John Spies, the local authority on culture and caves. Here the walls are posted with information about the region, as well as the recognition that with the advent of ecotourism to the region there has been a "50% decline in deforestation".

7.6.20 *Tham Mae Lanna*

A tour into this remarkable cave was made with two guides from the village. This is not a site receiving high visitation. High water levels in the rainy season close the cave, and difficulties in accessing the cave do not make it easy for everybody. In addition, most of the cave is accessible only by following and wading in the river up to the waist. Rumoured to be nominated as a World Heritage Site, this cave is 13km long and filled with fascinating wildlife including bats, roaches, frogs, blind fish, spiders and much more. Spectacular limestone formations add to its beauty (see Photo 7.17, p.133). It is a remarkable and beautiful site, but is not one set to become a major tourism destination. However it can cope with a few special interest visitors each year. There was only evidence that one group had visited before us this season, and a Coke can had regrettably been left. The special wildlife of the site dictates that tourism to the cave should be strictly regulated to protect the cave's integrity and the sensitive wildlife within. This cave, a few kilometres from Tham Lod, again highlights the richness of Mae Hong Son province.

7.6.21 *Tham Pla*

This site is a brief tourism stop close to the main highway from Mae Hong Son to Pai. A river emerging from a mountain marks the site of a cave within and by this a large group of fat carp have made their home. The cliff site has spiritual significance, and a Buddha image is set into the rock close to the fish. People come to feed the fish and pay their respects to the Lord Buddha. The fish are protected not by law but by the spiritual association at the site. While this site is a mass tourism destination, it does emphasize the close links between nature and Buddhism and the respect that nature is often afforded as a result. There is much that can be learned or reinforced from this spirituality, as it is a common attribute in many natural sites. The link is seldom explained, and sites such as this one could seize on the opportunity of not only educating the foreigners about Thai spirituality, but also reinforcing it among the Thais themselves.

7.6.22 *Wiang Kosai National Park*

A brief visit was made to this park as tourists. The main attractions are the waterfalls, and no information is give about trails or other opportunities for recreation or education within the park. Extensive forests cover the mountain ridge that rises to 1250m, and 78 bird species have been recorded at the site (Gray *et al* 1994). Trails into the forests may add to the draw of this park.

7.6.23 *Mae Yom National Park*

An attempt was made to visit this park on the Yom River. On arrival in Phrae province it was considered that a visit by a foreigner would be too dangerous and confrontational. The issue surrounding this park is that it was awaiting approval for the construction of a dam that would flood the last remaining stand of ancient teak forest in Thailand. Advocates for the dam are both local and distant, since the river was blamed for the extensive flooding in Bangkok. For local residents it would also provide a means of irrigating their fields and increasing crop yields. Opponents include conservationists who believe the sanctity of the site is of great significance since the teak forest is the last stand of the once dominant forest type of the north. Some locals also oppose the dam, but it is rumoured that their reason for opposing stems from a desire to continue illegally harvesting timber from the national park. With the advent of floodwaters, they will lose their illegal income. As a foreign observer it was thought that I would not be trusted by either side.

It is a tragedy that the country's last stand of teak forest may be subject to flooding. Loss of this forest would not only be a major loss of Thai natural heritage, but possibly for the world given that the only other teak forest is rumoured to be somewhere in Burma (Myanmar), only its whereabouts is uncertain and its very existence questionable. Its prestigious status as the last teak forest would have considerable tourism appeal.

7.7 Discussion

Dearden and Harron (1994) alluded to the change in visitor activities and motives to the region and the activities they are seeking when trekking. Results and observations from this study suggest support their conclusions, and suggest that there may yet be further changes and demands occurring. Time spent in a trekking agency revealed frustrations about the existing state of the trekking industry, and the desire for more sensitive tourism to cultural areas coupled with a heavier focus on nature. During interviews, people commented on the existing cultural tourism and were of the opinion that this was far from ecotourism, largely because of cultural insensitivity and exploitation.

The trekking agencies in Chiang Mai are pivotal in their control of the tourism offered in the region. The TAT has recognized that many tourists coming to the region are repeat tourists doing their own tours and that they are very independent. Visitors then who come to the region are going to demand better information, since they require a good background of the sites on offer in order to make for themselves a satisfying vacation. Currently neither the agencies nor the TAT offer such information for tourists seeking nature-based activities. On the one hand the TAT is right not to launch into a campaign for ecotourism promotion given that few places are ready to accommodate ecotourists, while on the other hand there are many sites that visitors could benefit from receiving information about (especially national parks). Common opinions were that the ecotourists of Northern Thailand will be foreigners. Durst (1986:8) writes "few Thais are well aware of the natural features possessed by their country. Thais are social oriented and tend to make visits to parks and natural areas for social events, unlike Westerners who visit parks with the intention of communing with nature". Observations of behaviour in natural areas, and the desire to return to sites with more friends suggest that this is partly true. However, attention must also be paid to a growing minority of Thai visitors now also demanding educative nature-based activities, especially for birdwatching. The trend for nature appreciation among Thais looks set to change. The biophilia hypothesis may currently have a cultural dichotomy. The Thais are seeking one kind of connection to the natural world around them, and this connection relates more to the setting. Foreign visitors are seeking a more intimate and understanding experience in the setting through education and exposure to contents of that setting. Historically, and as Durst (1986) suggests, the social orientation of Thais has meant that natural locations are favoured for this activity alone. This is born out as an aesthetic desire to see waterfalls, and in the group photograph behaviour demonstrated near colourful flowers. However, an obvious and very evident increase in other nature-based activities is seizing the residents of Thailand where a deeper communing with nature is becoming more important. The rise in birdwatching and similar activities among the Thai people, and a concern for nature preservation suggests that there is a convergence in biophilia among different cultures. Such convergence is possibly a result of the 'global village' concept with the exposure of one culture to another, the sharing of knowledge and the realization that there are different ways of thinking. With the escalation of tourism in the region and to Thailand as a whole, there is greater cross-cultural exposure. Any convergence and sharing between cultures should at least be two-way, so that foreign visitors gain equally from the Thai people.

Existing trekking offered is for the most part culture-adventure based. Only a small handful of agencies have begun to offer a more nature-oriented trek. Given tourists time constraints when travelling, the last thing many of them will want to do is spend a week in Chiang Mai trying to organize a trek. Here the role of the TAT becomes important in distributing appropriate information geared for different tourist types.

Interviews with research participants reveal that there are a few places that receive most of the tourists, and an enormous range of other sites that very few people visit or find out about. The focus is currently very provincial (Chiang Mai province) with few people getting beyond this province (or the northern province of Chiang Rai). This is despite a diversity of equally attractive sites in other provinces. Thus the result is that a lot of visitors interested in natural areas are directed towards a few sites, and within these sites the visitors are concentrated to a few key attractions. This results in the heavy use of small areas, and a limited distribution of income benefits. Information about other provinces, and about other activities available at sites, as frequently requested, could disperse these visitors and income.

With respect to promotion the strongest voices were against any more promotion of sites in Northern Thailand, as they seem to be promoted well enough already. Here the problem would be that there are a few places that are well promoted, and it is to these that people go. Other parts of the north can still benefit from promotion, so long as it is appropriate to the region and the specific sites, and does not lead to mass tourism and consequent erosion of an otherwise sustainable resource. Much emphasis was put on the need for a new kind of promotion, one that fosters better appreciation for the environment and better behaviour by visitors in natural areas. There were many criticisms directed towards bad behaviour, but there are indications that this is changing, and these changes cannot and do not happen overnight. Promotion of better behaviour can only assist with these changes.

The sites that people are visiting suggest that diversity is the key to vacationing in Northern Thailand for many people, while some are there for specific purposes (such as birding). A large number of sites were listed, and yet this represents only a small portion of the potential of Northern Thailand. Whole provinces were for the most part unvisited by research participants. Justice to the sheer number of sites and the potential of Northern Thailand cannot really be given by me, since there were so many sites that I could not visit given the time available. With the original intention of designing plans for the region, it would be amiss for me to try, given the vast expanses of unexplored territory and known sites that I was unable to visit.

On the thematic level for promotion of ecotourism activities or attractions, a number of themes become apparent and are worth further consideration. Northern Thailand is gaining increasing recognition as an outstanding birdwatching destination, and already makes up a part of international birding tours. The topography and biogeography of the region have given rise to many different and lush forest types, from submontane to hill evergreen and deciduous dipterocarp forests. The mountainous topography of most of Northern Thailand offers exceptional scenic viewing and endless road trips, just as there are prolific world class caves and waterfalls. Wildlife should not be discounted, as so many participants in this study have thought. There are still vestiges of wildlife that can attract visitors, although some of these are tied up in the more restricted wildlife sanctuaries. Given the density and poverty of populations in the region, a fully protectionist approach can often be amiss in safeguarding the wildlife of a region. It is essential that the cooperation of local people is sought and supports the conservation initiatives. This is seldom yet the case in Thailand. Ecotourism may bridge the gap between protected areas and their resident populations.

A further theme is the incredible flora of the region. There are endemic flowers and trees on the summit of Doi Chiang Dao and large parasitic treasures of Doi Suthep-Pui. These specialties are the kind of unusual attractions which visitors are willing to spend considerable sums of money to see (Elliott 1993).

As a component of other attractions or possibly as a theme itself, the spiritual and cultural significance of sites would greatly benefit Northern Thailand. Explanation of the spiritual significance of a site and its nature can promote the values of the Buddhist philosophy to foreign and Thai visitors, since it is so often an integral component of many sites. This is often true of cultures that may have an appreciation and understanding of nature beyond our expectations. The Karen have a reputation for being peaceful and charming compared to other hilltribes, and have a unique and full appreciation of the natural world and resources around them (Elliott and Beaver 1993). There is little explanation about this or incorporation into tourism, and yet there is plenty of opportunity.

Northern Thailand boasts such an enormous diversity and potential for a new approach to tourism and ecotourism. Visitors are becoming increasingly demanding, and if the region fails to promote and manage its huge natural resource, then the industry could well fail after a brief episode of success, if it takes off at all. While the focus is still on hilltribe tourism, there is a risk that the interest in tourism to the region will decline because of over-promotion, excess visitation and a decline in hilltribe authenticity. A shift to nature-based activities may recover this decline, but only if the valuable natural attractions of the region are given the respect they are due, and if tourism is strictly managed.

Chapter 8

Doi Inthanon National Park: a case study for potential ecotourism

Chapter 7 suggested strongly that the northern focus for existing ecotourism activities and potential is Doi Inthanon National Park. This park was mentioned and recommended above all other sites in the north, and was also the only park fully recognized by the TAT as offering attractions suitable for visitors interested in nature. Given the overwhelming emphasis on this park by visitors (both foreign and national), by staff of other protected areas and by academics, particular attention was paid to this park during the course of the study, and additional data was collected here to make a case study. If the focus is so dominantly on this park, it is important that this park can offer excellent quality activities that can meet the demands of ecotourists, and it is on this park that a judgment on the rest of the region will likely be made.

Hvenegaard (1996), following an in-depth study of ecotourist typologies in the park, recognized that a clearer picture is required to determine the levels of management intervention in the park, and that there is a need for an assessment of market demand for nature treks. This study moves towards these research goals by determining the level of interest in nature and treks among visitors to the park, as well as incorporates previously ascertained management issues from Chapter 6.

8.1 About the park

Doi Inthanon National Park is a category II protected area covering 42,840 hectares (WCMC and IUCN 1994). It was designated a national park in 1972 (Gray *et al* 1994). It is administered by the National Parks Division of the Royal Forestry Department, which oversees the broad management objectives of Thai national parks as set out in the National Parks Act of 1961:

- protection and conservation of critical resources and ecological systems;
- promotion of recreation and tourism opportunities;
- provision of opportunities for education and research (Snidvongs 1988).

The park is located about 80km southwest of Chiang Mai. It is composed of granite mountains that rise to make the summit Thailand's highest peak at 2,565 metres above sea level. It is the source of ten major streams that drain into three river basins (Mae Klang, Mae Chem and Mae Wang) all of which drain into the Ping River (Tan-Kim-Yong and Boonto 1995). The forest cover is approximately 57% of the total park area. Between the elevations of 1000 and 1600m the forest has largely been cleared by swidden agricultural practices. The park covers a number of forest types, including Dry Evergreen, Lower Montane, Upper Montane, Limestone Vegetation, Dry Deciduous Forest and Mixed Deciduous Forest (MIDAS 1993). The Upper Montane forest type is unique to Doi Inthanon, since the mountain is 300m higher than any other in the country. In addition, recent reforestation plantations have included a large amount of pine, which, while affording protection to watersheds, do little to compensate for the loss of the previous diverse forest types (Dearden 1995).

Occurrence of key species and/or endemic species is very limited when compared to other parks (MIDAS 1993), but the park has been noted for its exceptional avifauna, and is described as "one of the richest birdwatching sites in the entire country" (Lekagul and Round 1991). The massive demise and extirpation of large mammal species has largely been attributed to the resident hilltribe communities in the park (Dearden 1995).

The villages within the park represent three ethnic groups – the Karen, Hmong and Thai. In the area, 27 Karen villages have been established between 600 and 1000 metres elevation for more than 200 years. The Hmong moved in about 50 years ago at elevations up to 1500m, and only one Thai village is found in the park at an elevation of 300-400 metres. Population statistics put the number of residents in the park at over 4,500. Hmong villages are larger than Karen villages, and the largest and most conspicuous village is Ban Khun Klang (Hmong), which has a population of over 808 (Tan-Kim-Yong and Boonto 1995).

8.2 Park problems

A number of problems affect the park, and highlight problems that are common in other parks of the region:

1. Population growth has been very significant since and despite the designation of the national park, and is a result principally of unregulated immigration of Hmong hilltribes to the park. When the park was first established (1972) the population was 1,657. The population has almost tripled in 25 years. This has caused an imbalance in the previously sustainable agricultural practices, making them now unsustainable. The result has been increased forest clearance.
2. Royal Project implementation and legislation, both designed to stop opium cultivation, has also resulted in increased forest clearance, since more land is required for cash crops than opium or cabbages for similar financial returns (Dearden *et al* 1996).
3. Cash crops have required higher usage of pesticides causing contamination of watersheds and a public health concern.
4. Depleting forested land as a result of the above has caused the known and possible extirpation of many species from the park, including tigers, bears, serow, sambar deer, langurs, macaques and gibbons. In addition many species of birds such as hornbills and the white-winged wood duck have disappeared.
5. Poor watershed protection resulting from forest clearance has resulted in erosion and flooding problems downstream, resulting in economic losses notably for lowland farmers in Chom Thong district.
6. Impoverishment of Karen hilltribes and poor rice yields has led to further illegal clearance of land and consequent imprisonment, and desperation has led them to work for low rates for the Hmong. The Hmong's comparative wealth and business mind coupled with the Karen's predicament, leads to social instability and unrest between hilltribes.
7. Competition for land, desperation, and regulations enforced by park officers have all led to further unrest and instability, with violence and arrests (Tan-Kim-Yong and Boonto 1995).
8. Forest resources are also depleted from activities such as cutting for fuelwood, construction and furniture, gathering of plants and hunting wildlife (Dearden 1995).

The extent and complexity of the social and environmental problems and actions are summarized in Figure 8.1 taken from Tan-Kim-Yong and Boonto (1995).

Tourism related problems have also been described:

1. A rapid expansion in park visitation and the private tourism industry is evident, but comes with a lack of environmental understanding and awareness among tourists, tour agencies and personnel;
2. There is a shortage of national park personnel and funding to address tourism related problems;
3. Formal and informal mechanisms to stimulate local community participation and cooperation in conservation and rehabilitation of national park forests do not exist (Boonyasaranai 1994).

Tan-Kim-Yong and Boonto (1995) also describe a number of criticisms directed at the trekking industry that further the problems for villagers and the national parks. These are that:

1. treks are not designed to benefit hilltribes maximally;
2. treks are too low budget, inexpertly planned and led, and not highly educational;
3. treks draw on young ordinary tourists in the country and are not targeted to the most appropriate groups.

Ecotourism is seen as one very possible management prospect that can help reduce the problems described above so long as it is managed strictly and provided that the benefits are fed back to the communities within the park (Tan-Kim-Yong and Boonto 1995, Boonyasaranai 1994, Hvenegaard and Dearden 1996).

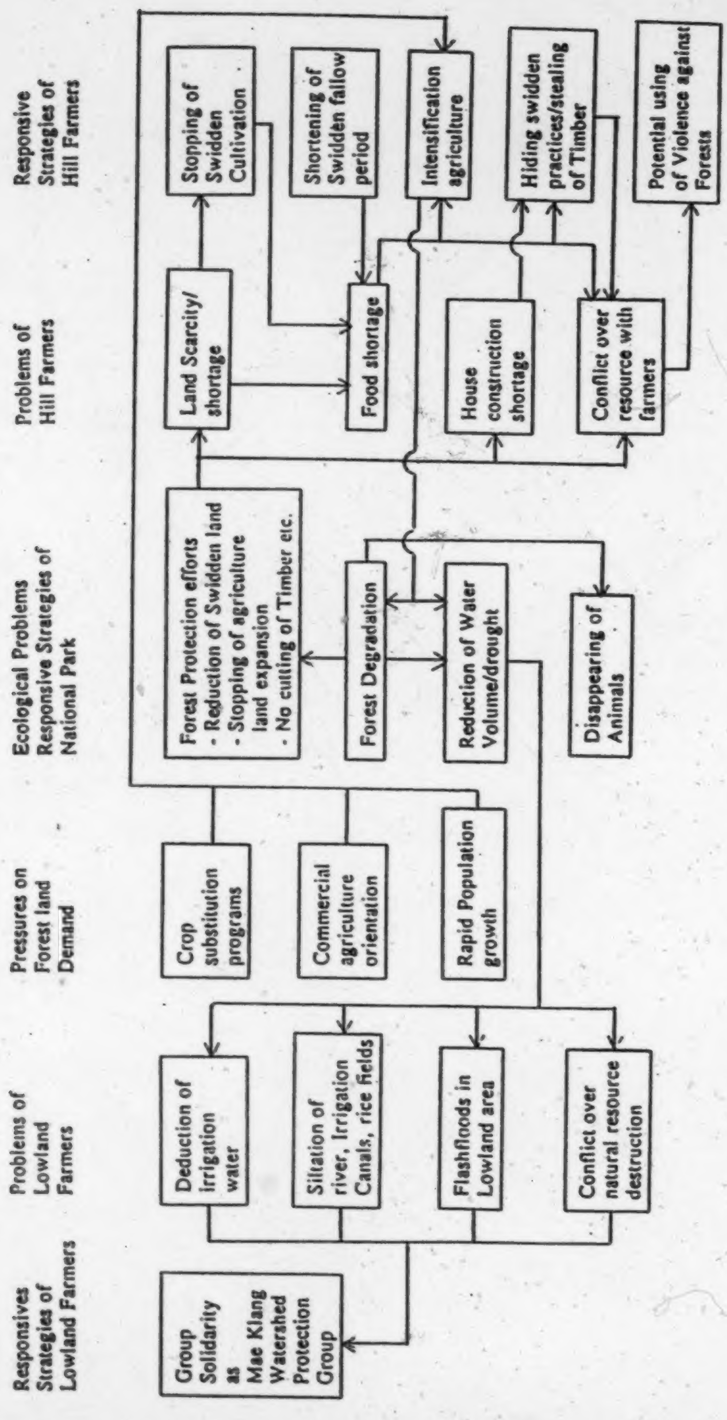
Responsives Strategies of Lowland Farmers
Group Solidarity as Mae Klang Watershed Protection Group
Problems of Lowland Farmers
Deduction of irrigation water
Siltation of river, Irrigation Canals, rice fields
Flashfloods in Lowland area
Conflict over natural resource destruction
Pressures on Forest land Demand
Crop substitution programs
Commercial agriculture orientation
Rapid Population growth
Ecological Problems Responsive Strategies of National Park
Forest Protection efforts
- Reduction of Swidden land
- Stopping of agriculture land expansion
. No cutting of Timber etc.
Forest Degradation
Reduction of Water Volume/drought
Disappearing of Animals
Problems of Hill Farmers
Land Scarcity/ shortage
Food shortage
House construction shortage
Conflict over resource with farmers
Responsive Strategies of Hill Farmers
Stopping of Swidden Cultivation
Shortening of Swidden fallow period
Intensification agriculture
Hiding swidden practices/stealing of Timber
Potential using of Violence against Forests

Figure 8.1: Summary of situation complexities of forest land use and management problems in Doi Inthanon National Park. *Source:* Tan-Kim-Yong and Boonto (1995).

8.3 Previous results

Chapters 5,6 and 7 frequently made reference to Doi Inthanon National Park. Results from these chapters are summarized below.

8.3.1 *Motives*

Most visitors to the park were driven by a desire to enjoy a natural setting and the unusual climate. Pleasure was taken in seeing waterfalls, forests and clouds, and in being at the summit of the highest mountain in Thailand. More specific interests were in the orchids, rhododendron and birds of the mountain. An in-depth consideration of interests is considered later. This park also has a high return visitation.

8.3.2 *Management issues*

A number of issues were addressed that relate specifically to Doi Inthanon, and to natural areas in general. For a detailed description of visitors' perceptions, refer to section 6.3.1. Management suggestions that can be applied to Doi Inthanon are summarized below:

- provide trail information and interpretive signs in both Thai and English so visitors have improved awareness about the opportunities for recreation in the park;
- more trails and of greater length to meet enthusiasts' demand and cater for special interest groups such as birders;
- improved and accurate maps showing trails;
- improved booking and information for accommodation, but strictly limit any further development of accommodation within natural areas;
- clean up garbage and promote cleaner behaviour and responsibility among tourists;
- promote and inform visitors about regulations, and provide better enforcement;
- control large groups and noise levels by increasing awareness and enforcement;
- provide bilingual guides and rangers for interpretive purposes;
- improve public transport to help reduce dependency on private or rental vehicles, reducing congestion and pollution and risky alternatives such as hitch-hiking;

- better promotion of environmental issues at the park gate, visitor centres and through advertising;
- consider limits on certain tourist activities in sensitive sites or on some trails by determining appropriate carrying capacities;
- consider limits on facilitating access to natural sites to help impose a natural order of limitation;.
- control and limit concession activities, keeping them clear of natural attractions.

Visitors were strongly of the opinion that no more development is necessary, only that there should be an improvement in the existing quality of services and facilities, and better information about them.

With respect to promotion, opinions varied from providing more information about other features in the park beyond the much-visited summit, to just promoting better behaviour in the park.

8.4 New data sources

Given that 51% of the open-ended surveys were conducted in Doi Inthanon National Park, supplementary data were sought to obtain a broader picture of visitor interests in the park. A quick response survey, lasting from 5 to 10 minutes was handed out to visitors leaving the Angkha nature trail. The bilingual (Thai/English) survey (Appendix D) was handed out at this site in order to obtain the opinions of visitors who were using a nature trail, thereby eliminating the majority of the tourists who were visiting the park to be at the summit of the mountain as a 'pilgrimage'. By choosing these visitors, it is possible that a higher proportion of nature-motivated visitors was selected, instead of a mass tourist type found at the summit, stuppas and waterfalls. These responses were considered to be more valuable for a study on ecotourism issues.

Questions on this survey related to satisfaction and use of existing trails and information sources, preferences for trail design and length, preferences for accommodation types, and natural or cultural interests. A total of 492 surveys were completed, 9% of which were completed by foreigners. Fifteen foreign nationalities were represented from Europe, North America, Australasia, the Middle East, Africa and

Southeast Asia. Data were managed and analyzed using the Social and Political Sciences Statistical Package for ease of data handling, and in facilitating frequency distributions to add further descriptive data to those already obtained.

Further to this survey, trail use was observed for the Angkha nature trail at the summit, and personal observations on the park in general were noted during the course of the study.

8.5 Nature trails

Few trails are actively promoted or used in the park. The most well known, accessible and used trail is the Angkha nature trail near the summit. The Gew Mae Pan nature trail starts and ends near the stuppas. Park rangers willingly describe these two short trails. However, there are more trails. At the visitor centre near the park headquarters two other trails are described. One is the Siriphum Waterfall long hiking trail near the headquarters. The theme for this trail is described as montane birds, moist hill evergreen forest, succession and cultivated areas. It is 4km long and can take up to 4 hours. The other is the Pang Somdet long hiking trail, which is 8km long and takes up to 6 hours to complete (at Niyom Phrai Phamon Karen Village). The theme for this trail is described as historical, with wildlife and indigenous knowledge and open hill evergreen forest. Not once were these two longer trails described or suggested to me by park rangers, nor did any visitors I spoke to use them or know about them. My research partner's and my initial experience with the park was one of deep frustration. In a large and mountainous park full of diverse forest types and scenery, it was expected that there would be much more on offer to enable us to experience the park. We felt confined to the road and highly developed areas of the park. Further discussions later revealed that there are in fact 7 trails in the park, most of which are closed off to stop tourists using them. This is reportedly done in order to protect some parts of the park from overuse and to protect visitors who are not in the company of a ranger from the dangers of the park (these were not adequately described nor evident).

Both the Angkha and Gew Mae Pan trails were explored. An attempt to find the Siriphum waterfall trail was made, and possibly found, but a complete lack of signs and clear trail network made it impossible to determine if it was the trail or any trail.

8.5.1 *Angkha nature trail*

This nature trail is short (360m) and leads visitors through the upper montane forest unique to the park. Here a rhododendron flowers, and goes by the Thai name of "Gulap Pan Pi" meaning a thousand year rose (see Photo 8.1, p.155). This rhododendron (*Rhododendron delavayi*) is only found at one other site. Bogs below the boardwalk harbour the only example of Sphagnum moss to be found in Thailand. Rare birds are frequently sighted in this forest, and the trail is well known in the birding community (see Photo 8.2, p.155).

The trail is generally beautiful, especially in the wet season when the epiphytic ferns and orchids are profuse and moss lushly carpets the ground and tree trunks. The boardwalk is generally sound and well built but, probably as a consequence of people's inability to follow park rules, barbwire has been profusely added between and around the rails. This is unsightly. In addition the now frequently recognized surplus of bins has also made its way onto the trail. Better education and promotion of park regulations and respect for nature might help to reduce the need for these ugly additions. It seems that the presence of the bins promotes littering, and the bins often have an 'aura' of garbage around them.

Visitor behaviour was noted over the course of two days during a holiday weekend. Over a period of 5 hours and 48 minutes, 1981 visitors used the trail. On occasion there was congestion on the path down to the trail. The boardwalk is designed such that the trail is one way and circular. Over a two-hour period a discrete location was taken at the start of the trail to observe how people used the trail. During this period, 599 used the trail, and less than 1% were foreign tourists. Only 19 visitors went in the wrong way. However, 123 came back out the same way as they went in. Conversations among tourists were overheard, and I could recognize key words in Thai sufficiently to understand the motives for people visiting the trail. Most people seemed interested in seeing the rhododendron. This might also account for why so many people came back out the same way as they went in, since the rhododendron is located at early point on the trail, and at the time was not flowering. This audible disappointment meant that many visitors turned around instead of completing the trail. This caused congestion at the entrance.

Photo 8.1 above: *Rhododendron delavayi* is a popular attraction in this park; **Photo 8.2 right:** rare, endemic birds like the Chestnut-tailed Minla attract birders to Doi Inthanon; **Photo 8.3 below right:** monks, participating in the research, visit the sacred sites of the park; **Photo 8.4 below:** submontane forest on Gew Mae Pan Nature Trail is one of the unique attractions; **Photo 8.5 above right:** Saturnid moths are attracted to lights at Checkpoint II and could be a significant attraction.

Such high levels of visitation (over 340 an hour) are exceptional and generally confined to holiday weekends. However, the disruption was enormous. Tourists complained of the noise and disturbance, and birdwatchers were particularly aggravated since the birds had been scared into the deeper forest and could no longer be seen from this nature trail. Children often ran and screamed as they went round the boardwalk, and they could be heard throughout the forest. The percentage of tourists interested in nature amongst these many visitors can only be guessed at. However, some guidance might be taken from their dress style and equipment being carried. Ecotourists and nature lovers generally have earthy-coloured outdoor clothing, heavy duty hiking boots, hats, binoculars and heavy duty camera equipment. Only 2% of trail users were recorded as looking like ecotourists.

Suggestions were made by visitors who were upset at the way the trail was being used, to impose an entry fee or impose restrictions on how many people can use the trail. A small entry fee could be put in place. This could have several functions: to generate income to maintain and improve the trail; to provide financing for information and brochures about the trail; to discourage non-serious users from using the trail. Excessive visitation might also be discouraged by the addition of a sign before the entrance indicating whether the rhododendron is in flower, since it is expected that a large portion of visitors would not use the trail if they knew that there were no flowers to be seen.

Of the many visitors, 1.7% were monks (see Photo 8.3, p155). There is a burial and spiritual site located just off the trail at its low point, to commemorate a death. This site is not only a site for nature but is spiritual as well. Behaviour and abuse of the trail might be improved if this message was put across clearly. Given the Thai people's strong spiritual sense, emphasis on the sacredness of the site and the respect it deserves might lead to quieter behaviour.

The Angkha nature trail is one of the greatest assets of the park, and of Northern Thailand's natural places. Great care must be taken to preserve its integrity as a sanctuary for nature, or the role of the park as an ecotourism destination will be severely compromised.

User opinions

Respondents indicated on the quick response survey a high rate of satisfaction with the trail with 45.7% saying that they were satisfied with the trail, while 42.7% were very satisfied. Only 2.4% indicated that they were not satisfied, and the same percentage said that they were very unsatisfied. A few (6.7%) failed to respond or had no opinion.

8.5.2 *Gew Mae Pan nature trail*

This 3km nature trail underwent a number of changes during the course of my visit. The trail takes visitors through a diversity of ecosystems, from hill evergreen forest into lower montane forest (see Photo 8.4, p.155), and out onto natural rangelands that harbour wildflowers more commonly associated with the Himalayas. The open aspect of these rangelands affords excellent views of the mountainside and into the Mae Chem valley. Old rhododendron trees grow extensively on the mountainside (see Photo 8.1, p.155) and the forests are rich with epiphytic orchids.

At the start of my visit, the trail was occasionally hard to use because of steep wet slopes in creeks, but was generally easy. The trail gave a sense of a very fascinating hike through wilderness country, a feat quite hard to achieve in this populated region. Funding was secured to upgrade the trail to make it more accessible and provide interpretive signs along the way. By the end of my stay, the basic infrastructural work had been done. Attractively designed wooden bridges had been put in place, and the path widened and improved. These changes were good. However, out on the rangeland, where the trail runs near the mountainside, a several hundred metre fence of concrete and wood had been erected. When management was asked just what this fence was for, they said it was for safety, since they did not want people falling off the mountain. I consider the addition of this fence entirely inappropriate and a violent intrusion on a safe wilderness area that was previously very beautiful. Contacts in the Landscape Technology Department of Maejo University were informed, and were deeply upset by the park's decision, and students planned to begin protests. These students knew what the trail was like before developments began. Staff at the TAT office in Chiang Mai were informed, and also expressed disappointment. It is possible that the decision was made based on the funding provided, and that they felt a need to use all of the money on infrastructure. This money would have been better applied to the interpretive facilities and brochures about the trail. Given the removal of this fence, and subject to the exact nature of the planned interpretation for the trail, this nature trial could become a first class example for Thailand and the rest of the world.

User opinions

Of the 492 Angkha trail users, only 17 (3.5%) had used the Gew Mae Pan nature trail as well. All 17 respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with the trail (8 and 9 respectively). Three respondents later criticized the erection of the fence.

8.5.3 *Visitor's suggestions for trail improvements*

On the quick response survey a short space was given asking respondents to add any comments on if and how they would like the trails to be improved (Table 8.1). The most frequently cited request by respondents was for more information in the form of brochures (including returnable brochures), better and clearer signs with more information about trees and flowers, and information in two languages so that foreign and domestic tourists could benefit. One suggestion for portable cassette interpretation was made. Requests for more rangers and guides to lead people on the trails and provide information along the trails and at rest stops were also made. Some respondents either indicated that they wanted a longer trail or that they wanted more trails, while others

comment	*% of total (n=492)*
provide more information, brochures and signs	34
provide more guides and rangers	7
lengthen the trail	6
provide more trails	4
improve the garbage situation	3.5
upgrade the boardwalk	3
provide better enforcement	1.5
have more stops along the trail	1
reduce noise	1
keep it as it is	4.5
keep it natural	4

Table 8.1: Comments about Doi Inthanon trail improvements from the quick response survey.

wanted things to be left as they were, or if any changes were to be made then they should be natural and unobtrusive. The garbage problem was considered by some. Suggestions to counteract the problem included fines for littering, a ban on food on the trail, a bin before the trail and to remove those bins on the trail, and better signs to educate people about the problem. Other infrequent criticisms included the ugliness of the barbwire and how the existing rangers do not give out enough information.

Reference to other trails was made. The Gew Mae Pan trail received three criticisms about the fence that had been erected (which was 18% of users). Two people complained about the trail to Borichinda cave. They had walked 5km and never found the cave, a testament to the poor signage often described.

The frequent comments about the need for more information in this open-ended question show the need and value of such questioning, as opposed to quick responses. Satisfaction with information was addressed as a separate question, with answers based on a Likert scale. The majority indicated that they were either satisfied or very satisfied (48.6% and 26.6% respectively) and 11.7% said that they were not satisfied. Given these results it is reasonable to think that there is adequate information about the park and on the trails, but a probing question showed that 41% wanted more information on the trails alone, in the form of rangers, guides, signs and brochures. Among the foreign respondents 38% said that they wanted more information in English.

8.5.4 *Visitors' opinions: trail availability, type and preferences*

Previous results suggested that there is a demand for more trails in the park. A foreign visitor, having completed the quick response survey was overheard remarking "there is much potential here; about the only park you can really see is Khao Yai; they need more trails here". The quick response survey had questions concerning visitors' satisfaction with the number of trails available, their preferred length and type of trail. Participants were also asked if they would be interested in treks that lasted more than one day.

Satisfaction with the provision of trails, based on a Likert response scale, was high with 51% being satisfied and 27% very satisfied while 8% were not satisfied and

2% said that they were very unsatisfied. The results are concurrent with earlier comments about trail number, with only a small proportion indicating a desire to hike on more trails. The majority of Angkha trail users may just be using that trail given its convenient location and its short length. A low user number for longer trails would be desirable since impacts would be lower.

Respondents were also asked what kind of trails they prefer, whether they want a self-guided trail (like Angkha), a trail guided by a local villager or one that is led by a park ranger. Some of the respondents (10%) had more than one preference. Nearly two thirds (64%) said they preferred self-guided trails, 30% wanted trails guided by a park ranger, and 14% wanted to be guided by a local villager. There is considerable demand for the services of park rangers that are presently hard to come by, and a higher than expected desire to be led by local villagers, a service that is not yet promoted by the park.

During discussions the subject of effort was frequently brought up. A novice Thai birder that I spoke to expressed horror at walking 3km to watch birds, and many interviewees said that it is only the foreigners that are interested in long hikes. Respondents in the quick response survey were asked to indicate what length of trail they would prefer (Figure 8.2).

Given the nature of many of the visitors using the Angkha nature trial, it was anticipated that most respondents would express a desire to do short trails of 1km. However, more respondents indicated a preference for 3km trail lengths, which is the length of the Gew Mae Pan nature trail. It is therefore possible that many more visitors would use this trail if they had some information about it. A much larger than expected number expressed an interest in much longer trails, with 7.5% wanting to do trails of 15km or more. With 39.5% of respondents indicating a preference for trails of 5km or more, it is surprising that only 10% had earlier indicated dissatisfaction with trail availability in the park. (2% marked more than one trail length.) In Hvenegaard's (1994) study 82.7% of trekkers and visitors to the park expressed an interest in a one-day nature trek, and 47.5% of respondents (excluding birders) said that they were willing to trade their day's activities for a nature trek. This also suggests that the potential ecotourism market in the park could be very high (Hvenegaard 1996).

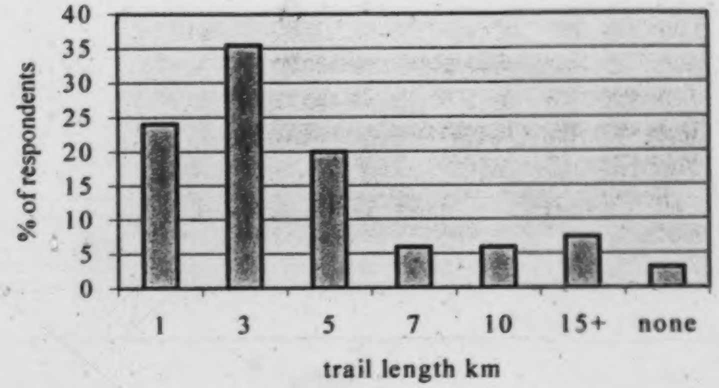

Figure 8.2: Preferred trail length from quick response survey in DINP, n=492, *none* indicates no response on survey.

Similarly there was a very strong interest in treks lasting for more than one day, with 34% who were very interested and 46% who were just interested. Only 12% were not interested and 7% did not complete the question or had no opinion. With longer treks, overnight accommodations must be available. The respondents' preference was mostly for camping (52%) and park accommodation (32%), while 17% said that they would prefer to stay in one of the hilltribe villages. A few (4.5%) did not respond, and some indicated more than one preference.

9.5.5 *Visitors' interests*

Participants in the quick response survey were asked to mark off three variables that were of interest to them, from a list of 16. These covered broad categories of nature, as well as cultural and scenic interests. The percentages of respondents choosing each category are given in Figure 8.3.

Birds, orchids and other flowers, forests and scenic attributes make up the commonest interests among visitors. More respondents than expected marked off butterflies and moths, fungi and caves. The degree of interest in the hilltribes is once again considerably low, a fact that has become apparent at other points during this study. Amphibians and reptiles attracted very little interest. The results suggest that most visitors to the park who used the Angkha nature trail are more interested in the natural attributes than the cultural. Interest was in large wildlife was much lower than expected, and may be the result of visitors' adjustment to knowing that the park is severely underrepresented in this category.

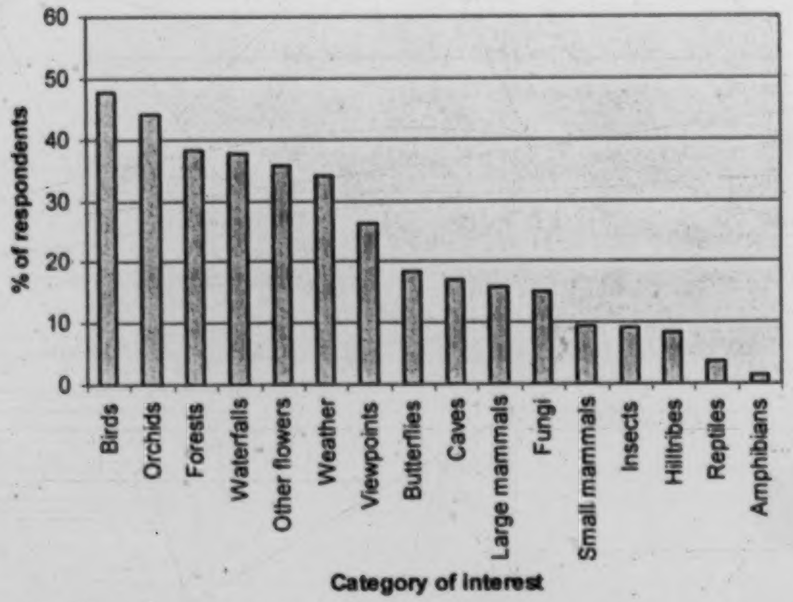

Figure 8.3: Respondents' preferred interests as a percentage of the total number of respondents (n=492) in the quick response survey in DINP.

8.6 Trekking agencies, tours and villagers

The potential market for ecotourism activities can only really be tested by offering actual opportunities within the park, as opposed to presenting visitors with hypothetical scenarios (Hvenegaard 1996). Of the 41 Chiang Mai trekking agencies visited, 11 offered a trek that incorporated Doi Inthanon National Park on the schedule.

Ten of these only offered a quick glimpse of the park. The typical visit by one of these tours involved a road trip to the summit by the tour bus, a brief visit at the summit and walk on the Angkha nature trail (unguided), and a stop at waterfalls on the way out of the park. The park represented a brief stop on a much longer trek involving hiking, hilltribes, elephant rides and rafting. The park was often visited on the last leg of the trek or tour, on the way back to Chiang Mai. The park is also a key destination on the itinerary of international and national (Bangkok) tour agencies exclusively for birdwatchers (Hvenegaard 1996), and these agencies have not been included in this study.

One Chiang Mai trekking agency offered much more than a brief stop. An involved trek had just been planned and proposed by Chiang Mai Green Trekking and Tour based in Chiang Mai and managed by Miss Jonggon Duangsri. This trek was undergoing its first trial runs at the time of my visit. This trek is unusual in that it does not focus on hilltribes, rafting and elephant rides. It is a multidimensional and educational trek involving the following:

- an introductory slide show about the park;
- a visit to Mae Klang waterfall;
- an overnight stay and traditional meals with Karen hilltribe village Ban Sob Haad, with the option of homestay or the for those who do not wish to intrude on village life, a stay in a rice hut in the fields, or camping;
- a visit to the summit, the Angkha nature trail and the Gew Mae Pan nature trail;
- birdwatching along the jeep trail near the checkpoint, a visit to the birding centre and camping at the headquarters;
- a visit to the Royal Project at Hmong village Ban Khung Klan and a stop at the Vachiratharn waterfall.

Superficially many of the components of the trek resemble standard treks offered by other agencies. However, the trek is approached in a different fashion. A guide from Chiang Mai coordinates the trek, and it is run in full cooperation of the Karen villagers of Ban Sob Haad. These villagers also act as guides and offer their insight to the natural features in which they have lived for so long, sharing their knowledge about wildlife and their traditional way of life. Visits to all sights and hikes on nature trails are conducted with full interpretation by these local guides and the naturalist guide from Chiang Mai. A dominant theme for the trek is birdwatching.

The village of Ban Sob Haad is small with 17 households and a population of 77 (Tan-Kim-Yong and Boonto 1995). In conversation with the headman of this village, the plight of poor hilltribe communities was made very plain. He had 7 children, all of which had left the village for the cities. Some of his daughters became prostitutes and had since died of AIDS related illnesses. Some of his sons had ended up in exploited positions in the city. The headman's dream was to give an incentive for the young of the village to stay. Their current poverty and subsistence lifestyle (in marked contrast to the Hmong of Ban Khung Klan supported by the Royal Project) forces them to leave or work for the Hmong. It is the headman's belief that ecotourism, as managed by Chiang Mai Green Trekking and Tour and the Local Heritage Interpretation Project overseen by Mr. Chantasith Boonyasaranai will lead to alternative incomes that will both reduce illegal activities in the park, and encourage the younger generation to stay.

As part of the project, two young men from the village are being trained on how to lead hikes and provide interpretation to groups. Naturally of a shy disposition, their confidence is growing as they gain more experience through the interpretation program being run for schoolchildren, led by Mr. Boonyasaranai. Because Kareni is their only language, the city guide needs to act as a translator as well. In addition to guiding, alternative income is sought by providing meals to visitors, and in selling non-traditional souvenirs. Using 100% natural fabrics, souvenirs are now being crafted to celebrate the national park.

A significant difference between this trek and others is that the operators are motivated by a sense of conservation and welfare. Profits are directed more substantially to the villagers, rather than wholly to the tour agency as is most often the case. Also, the trek is flexible in catering for people's sensitivities to other cultures. For some visitors the treks are too obtrusive on local culture, a feeling that became apparent during the course of interviews of tourists. This trek offers the opportunity to learn about the culture, yet not invade it. The headman welcomes visitors to his village, and sees it as a chance to share and learn from one another.

Some visitors to this trekking agency in Chiang Mai were very relieved to find that their interests were being catered for. This agency was also unique in visibly promoting sustainability, both cultural and environmental.

8.7 Additional observations

It was my feeling that this park is currently extremely limited in what it can offer to tourists. Despite being a small park by international standards, there is much diversity and potential hidden in the mountainous terrain. The high altitude results in many different forest types, yet the focus of the park currently really lies in a small band between the stuppas and the summit. Below the elevation of 1000m (below land that has largely been cleared by hilltribes) there are large tracts of deciduous forest. Almost all of the visitors drive right past all early attractions (except waterfalls) to reach the summit.

In addition to the diversity and beauty of forests, a number of other features were strongly evident. These include the birds, butterflies and orchids. Whilst birds currently have some recognition in the park, the value of the park as a bird sanctuary is still undersold. The summit boasts an endemic race of Greentailed Sunbird that is highly tolerant of visitors and exceptionally colourful, and yet most visitors at the summit fail to notice this pride of the park. Such obvious and dramatic wildlife could easily be used to promote the intrinsic values of the park and conservation initiatives.

At the checkpoint by the turn off to Mae Chem lights from the buildings attract enormous quantities of moths. During the first part of my visit many moths from the Saturnid family could be seen all resting on walls near lights (see Photo 8.5, p.155). These included the world's largest moth, the Atlas Moth (*Attacus atlas*). When park staff were informed that they could boast the world's largest moth as one of their assets, there was surprise. Nobody seemed to know. A simple attraction for passing visitors and interpretive point could easily be erected near the checkpoint to attract moths. Nearly 20% of respondents in the quick response survey expressed an interest butterflies and moths, and the sight of the world's largest moth in the wild (as opposed to farms in Mae Sa valley) may have considerable appeal. It could also be an opportunity to promote conservation issues, since the habitat of the Atlas Moth is under considerable threat from deforestation (Prakobvitayakit-Beaver pers. comm.). This would add another valuable addition to natural inventory of the park for ecotourists, and the moths are easy to observe since they are resting and mostly unable to fly during the day.

Another potential pride of the park could be the orchids. A wide range of forest types and altitude give many habitats in which orchids thrive, and the summit region of the park is exceptional for orchids. Trees are often laden with epiphytic orchids that are very visible when flowering. Despite such a huge interest in flowers, especially orchids (close to 45% of respondents), there is very little information to indicate that Doi Inthanon is one of the richest sites, and it should be celebrated for such richness.

During the course of the study at this site, many casual conversations were had with visitors at the summit who did not have time for a full interview. Frequently they would ask what there was to be seen in the park. When they discovered that they were standing right next to a rare and colourful bird, and that the flowers cascading from the trees were orchids, there was a lot of amazement and disbelief. This came with gratitude for informing them that such things existed in the park. The same went for nature tails, especially the Gew Mae Pan, about which many visitors had no idea. This suggests that the information is severely lacking, and that many visitors could have a considerably more satisfying experience if they knew what was on offer and where.

Before any full-scale promotion of the natural assets is undertaken, it is extremely important to consider the seasonality of the park. Birds have a significant migratory period, making some periods of the year more favourable than others. Orchids flower mostly from December for a few months. Butterflies and moths are most abundant during and towards the end of the rainy season following the lush growth of their food plants. Such seasonality is very marked. At the beginning of my visit (October) there were many species, but by December they had all but disappeared. The forests are also subject to these seasonal changes, with deciduous forests losing their leaves, and the lushness of epiphytic ferns and mosses severely reduced during the dry season. There are assets in the park all year round regardless of the season, but for special interest groups, a specific time of year is critical to the success of their visit. Information regarding seasonal trends does exist in the park, and is well documented by the Local Heritage Interpretation Project. It just fails to reach the people that often want to know.

Other areas that are worthy of further consideration in the development of ecotourism are more culture-oriented experiences. This park, as with many in the north, have culturally and spiritually significant sites. These could easily lend themselves to the sharing of spiritual philosophy and the reiteration of conservation messages for Thai people, while educating foreign visitors.

The cultural resource of the park is large and for the most part untapped. The Karen hilltribes are favoured among tourists for their traditional and gentle outlook on life. They can also boast a longstanding and (up until recently) successful relationship with the natural world about them (Dearden 1995, Elliott and Beaver 1993, Thongmak and Hulse 1993). Their knowledge and appreciation of the natural world and their life within it could be interesting to share and lessons could be learned from it.

8.8 Previous management proposals

Doi Inthanon has long been a central figure of the north, and second only to Doi Suthep-Pui National Park, has been the subject of a lot of research. Recently the focus of the tourism and tourism development proposed by the TAT has not provided any benefit to the hilltribe communities, but has increased benefits to private operators (Tan-Kim-Yong and Boonto 1995). The Ban Pha Mon Proposal is described by Dearden (1995). In order to prevent the economic leakage of the one third of birders who currently leave the park at night only to return the next day (Hvenegaard 1996), Dearden (1995) proposes that alternative accommodation to those that exist need to be built. He describes 7 reasons why a lodge could be built in the Karen village of Ban Pha Mon, including the village's desire to welcome an alternative source of income and provider of jobs, when their alternative is to leave or further deplete forest resources. A business plan is being developed by the University of Chiang Mai, and a potential market is seen in international ecotourism operators and societies. However, it was frequently the opinion of visitors to the park that no more development should take place.

Some criticisms have been voiced about the elitist focus that this high-priced lodge might have. However, there are many types of tourists and some will be seeking a different kind of experience to others. Those who are exclusively birders are willing to spend more money than others (Hvenegaard 1996) and would possibly welcome a comfortable place to stay. Other general ecotourists have a broader vision, and one that often extends to cultural interests as well. It is these ecotourists that might favour a more grassroots and multidimensional experience such as that on offer at Ban Sob Haad through Chiang Mai Green Trekking and Tour.

The trekking agency Chiang Mai Green Trekking and Tour is also linked to the Local Heritage Interpretation Program managed by Mr. Boonyasaranai. In a proposal titled "Nature Environment Education and Reforming of National Park Tourism" (Boonyasaranai 1994) four goals are outlined:

1. to increase environmental awareness and consciousness among youth volunteers, local communities and the tourists;
2. to develop institutional linkage in joint-management between agencies and the local community;
3. to increase environmental sustainability and stability;
4. to strengthen the active role of a club of naturalists and the local community.

Among the objectives is one to stimulate and rearrange the tourism activities toward ecotourism. The project intends to begin natural and cultural heritage programs, establish nature trails and develop nature study guidebooks. The project also aims to facilitate cooperation between different groups including local people. Falling comfortably within the mandate of the national park system is their intention to provide school education about conservation to children. Managers would like the project to be a pilot project for nature interpretation and training courses that could be created for other national park areas in the north.

This project is guided by members of the university at the Resource Management and Development Centre, the Youth Volunteers Club for Thai Heritage Conservation, Doi Inthanon National Park Office and the Chom Thong District Office. It will actively involve the Niyom-Prai Pa-Monn School staff and students in Ban Yang Pa-Monn village located in the park.

With a broad backing behind the project from a diversity of groups, and the involvement of a responsible trekking agency, an ecotourism venture has more chance of success, especially given the support of the village that is already actively involved in interpretation and the groundwork for an ecotourism project.

8.9 Discussion: Doi Inthanon and ecotourism - is it possible?

In a regional context, and in a limited international context, Doi Inthanon National Park has a good standing and reputation. It is, however, marked by considerable problems. The park has suffered from serious loss of forest cover and a loss in many of the large animal species that would otherwise indicate a healthy ecosystem. It has been singled out by the IUCN as a park that has suffered from severe degradation in part as a result from uncontrolled tourism development (Gray *et al* 1994). The future threats to the park's integrity are continued population growth and unregulated tourism. Further degradation of the park's ecological integrity might seriously undermine the sustainability of the park's status as a category II protected area (see WCMC and IUCN 1994 for park categories).

However, as recognized by the people participating in this study, it is still a park worth visiting, and can still be considered an important sanctuary for nature. Only a small number of the survey participants indicated that the cultural components of the park were of interest to them. The park can boast many natural features that have not previously been considered a draw for tourism. Of those that visited the park in 1993, Hvenegaard (1996) suggests that 12.5% were general ecotourists - not the full 854,000 that visited as is often mistakenly suggested. Ecotourists are a minority tourist type, but their visits to the park may have serious implications for the park's sustainability, especially in light of the growing demand for ecotourism in Southeast Asia (Campbell 1994) and to Doi Inthanon (Hvenegaard 1996, Boonyasaranai 1994). In 1993 ecotourists spent an estimated $1.6m CAD as a result of their trips to the park (Hvenegaard 1996) and this kind of revenue cannot be disregarded if the local people receive their share.

Presently a visit to the park can be frustrating and a disappointment for nature and hiking enthusiasts. The park is currently set up to deal with mass tourism to the summit and other key attractions. Continued over-promotion of the park for mass tourist destinations could seriously damage the park, and will not contribute to tourism sustainability nor the mandates set out by the National Park Act in 1961 (Snidvongs 1988).

The park is already served with easy access and basic accommodations. This basic infrastructure could be considerably improved if the recommendations of the visitors in section 8.3.2 are followed. One of the key changes requested is the provision of a trail system to satisfy many of the visitors. Trails do exist but are not open to the public for reasons described as safety and the park's wish that the trails are not used by "all kinds of and any" tourists. Given that only a minority of respondents expressed an interest in long trails, overuse is less likely to be a problem as it is on Angkha nature trail, since the length of trails will provide a natural order of limitation, and additional park limitations could easily be imposed on the trails. This might be managed by trail fees or a limit on the number of users per day.

This study suggests that there is a high level of latent demand for ecotourism activities among visitors to the park, and supports the findings of Hvenegaard (1996). Among these are birders, most of which stay overnight in the park, but many still return to Chiang Mai, only to travel back to the park the next day. These ecotourists might well make use of an ecotourism lodge proposal as described by Dearden (1995). General ecotourists tend to come for one day only, reducing local expenditure (Hvenegaard 1996) and the potential benefits that might trickle down to the local people.

Presently few local people are employed by the tourism industry (Hvenegaard 1996). Results from this study suggest that local people could have a much greater involvement with park activities, and thereby earn an alternative income. A significant but small proportion of survey respondents said that they would like to hike longer trails, with overnight stays in villages and in the company of a local guide. Demand does exist for their involvement within the park and Dearden and Harron (1994) expect higher visitor satisfaction if the guide is a local. While most general ecotourists only stay one day, results suggest a strong interest to stay in the park longer on treks lasting more than one day.

Possible changing trends in tourism to the region, and a demonstrated demand for a new type of trek suggest that Chiang Mai Green Trekking and Tour is approaching ecotourism to the park in an innovative and successful way. Otherwise, the park is poorly represented by trekking agencies - the rest of those interviewed merely taking a glance at the park, if at all.

This particular ecotourism project is an attractive proposal for a number of reasons aside from meeting ecotourist demand. One of the key avenues for its success is the involvement of the local and resident community of Ban Sob Haad. Boonyasaranai (1994) and Hvenegaard (1996) both recognize that ways to stimulate the local community into participating and cooperating in conservation in the park, either formal or informal, are seriously lacking. Without ecotourism, locals will have little motivation to assist in conservation, because they currently receive no or little economic benefits from tourism to the park. Improvements in park relations and residents have previously been demonstrated with ecotourism initiatives (Brockelman and Dearden 1990). Hvenegaard (1996) considers that potential links between ecotourism and conservation do exist in the park, but as yet they are poorly developed. This trekking opportunity can help to ameliorate the situation. A critical component of the ecotourism industry is local support (Hvenegaard 1994, Western 1993, Canadian Environmental Advisory Council 1992, Eber 1992), and this component is one of the main objectives of the treks being offered (Duangsri pers. comm.). Dearden *et al* (1996) consider the failure to involve local people in management issues in parks to be an injustice socially and ecologically.

One significant failing may jeopardize the long-term viability of this ecotourism project, and that is the provision of information. Many visitors expressed frustration at the lack of information, and the TAT only provides very limited information mostly for the park's mass tourism destinations. In addition the park management, while technically one of the members of the educational and interpretive project managed by Mr. Boonyasaranai, do not appear to be very involved at all. Given the nature of my research study in the park, it would have made good sense to inform me that this project was proposed and under way. However, it was not until several weeks later that I found out about the project, and that was through the Trekking Collective and Chiang Mai Green Trekking and Tour. The project is less likely to succeed if it does not have the active support of the park. Such backing might simply be in the form of promotion, a general area in which the park can make considerable improvements. Promotion of the project should begin in Chiang Mai through channels such as the TAT, and also at the entrance to the park. Herein lies another problem that most people, if they get any information at all, do not get until they reach the summit. Cooperation is paramount, and is a recognized requirement from the visitors' perspective as established in Chapter 4, Figure 4.2. More cooperation and communication is required between the project (including the village) and the park, otherwise changes to the park infrastructure, such as the fence on the Gew Mae Pan trail would have been advised against by those who have a vested and serious interest in the park.

Trends suggest that there might be an increasing demand for alternative treks such as the one currently offered by Chiang Mai Green Trekking and Tour. Once this trek becomes an established component of ecotourism in the region and in the park, Doi Inthanon could well be on the way to becoming a model of success for national parks in the north. This can only happen if changes and improvements are made that will add to visitors' overall satisfaction in the park. It is also heavily dependent on the strict and necessary regulations that must be imposed on the park and visitors to help keep the park in order and maintain its ecological integrity. With such strict management and the development of new ecotourism opportunities, I feel confident that the park can maintain and improve its reputation, and achieve the mandates as written in the National Parks Act of 1961 (Snidvongs 1988). These mandates can only fully be met if the contribution of the local people is recognized and they begin to understand the values of conservation through the economic contribution of ecotourism. This reflects upon the Dependency Theory, and the need for local involvement and generation of local revenue to alter the traditional patterns of dependency. It also draws upon the basic steps involved in the acceptance of an innovation, in Innovation Theory, where the need for appropriate sharing of information and the generation of awareness is required for the eventual adoption or acceptance of an ecotourism innovation.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

In each of chapters 5,6,7 and 8 I have written and discussed the results and issues pertinent to those particular chapters. Where appropriate, reflections on the theoretical premises on which the thesis is based (Figure 2.6) are given. In addition to summarizing these, there are a number of further issues that I would like to address.

9.1 Theoretical implications

Plog (1991) describes the tourist typologies by psychographic segments (Figure 2.2), and Duffus and Dearden (1990) categorize tourists into specialists and generalists (Figure 2.5). Findings in this study suggest a dominance of recreational or psychocentric visitors with generalist interests. With time, a destination will attract more generalists than specialists (Duffus and Dearden 1990). Dearden and Harron (1994) indicate a shift in demands among the recreational tourists now visiting Northern Thailand. This study concurs with the changes with time indicated in Figure 2.5 (that specialists are a minority) as well as with Dearden and Harron's proposed shift in demand. Indications are that a demand for ecotourism exists, and that this new focus for the tourism industry may provide a sustaining factor for regional tourism. Ecotourism may prevent the decline in tourist visitation, which is a possible scenario in Butler's model (Figure 2.3). Duffus and Dearden (1990) caution against promoting ecotourism to generalists, but in the case of protected areas tourism in this region, a promotion exclusively to specialists would bring few of the anticipated benefits to park management, and restrict the benefits brought to the local people.

Given that there is a demand and that there are possible societal benefits from ecotourism, an ecotourism concept is needed. Development of an ecotourism inventory and strategy may be hindered by the theory of dependency. One of the principles of ecotourism is for the fair distribution of benefits. Participants in this survey were optimistic about this principle, and there was support for Zurick (1992) who suggests that this theory is less appropriate for alternative tourism development such as ecotourism. However, in order for the dependency theorists not to be proven right, very strict governance over the management of ecotourism practices is required. Unfortunately, many ecotourism projects have been led by outside interests with little regard for local issues and little benefits for them (Brandon 1993).

In planning, as Miller (1995) suggests, parochialism is problematic, but can be overcome if it is given careful consideration. Northern Thailand has a diversity of attractions, some of which are already recognized, and many which are not yet incorporated into a plan or are not recognized as having value. Development of ecotourism activities, often to special interest groups, requires careful attention and even the input of special interest groups, as well as visitors with more general interests. Without an external perspective some attributes may continue to go unrecognized. This issue is addressed further in section 9.2.

Northern Thailand has a reputation among many visitors for a lack of large wildlife. Chapman (1998) describes the importance of large wildlife with respect to the biophilia hypothesis (Wilson 1984). This study suggests that there are many features beyond large wildlife that have the potential to draw visitors to a site. From forests to flowers and insects, all elements of wildlife gained some recognition, and the lack of large wildlife does not or should not serve as any hindrance to the establishment of a successful ecotourism industry.

With a possible concept for ecotourism, the idea needs to become an innovation. Innovation Theory suggests that awareness creates interest. Many communities are not aware of the concept of ecotourism, and some of those that have been informed have become interested (for example Huai Nam Pong). However, with an interest must come a thorough understanding, generally through education and information. These first steps are paramount for the initiation of any ventures in the region. The full-backing is required from the local people in order for a project to become a reality, and for its long-term success. From my experiences in the region, and as has been described by other authors (Brandon 1993, Ghimire 1991), such information sharing and local participation at the planning level has been lacking. Cox and Elmqvist (1993:6) go as far as saying that, "ecocolonialism, the imposition of European conservation paradigms and power structures on indigenous villagers, is incompatible with the principles of indigenous control of village rainforest preserves". If this is the case, then involvement and participation of local communities is even more essential. Given the novelty of ecotourism to Northern Thailand, there was little local awareness of the ecotourism concept, and therefore little interest. However, at Tham Lod Forest Park the concept had become a reality, with the adoption of a community controlled ecotourism project. Brandon (1993) highlights the importance of local empowerment as an objective of an ecotourism project, and that it will help ensure its success. At Huai Nam Pong, the headman was aware of the concept, and was also interested, but knew very little about it, and was keen to learn more. With low satisfaction, the innovation may be rejected. In the event of adoption it is important, as Miller (1995) asserts, to maintain the flow of information. Subkeaw (pers. comm.) criticized the many non-government organizations operating in the region. The criticism is that the organizations work at the local level for a few years and set up an innovation that is adopted, but when they leave the area they fail to provide an information or communication structure that allows the innovation to persist. Under these circumstances the adoption has failed, just when it seems it has become a success. Innovation Theory is vulnerable even at the last stages of adoption.

Once the ecotourism innovation is adopted, there remains the question of sustainability. If the innovation is poorly managed and does not meet the guiding principles of the industry, then the site or industry will probably not be sustainable. Butler's model (Figure 2.3) demonstrates the critical range of elements of capacity, where, after a given time, tourist numbers might be so high that negative impacts become significant. Dearden (1991) discusses the model with respect to hilltribe authenticity. The model equally applies to ecological or environmental integrity. If sustainability is not demonstrated at the point of consolidation and stagnation, then tourism will decline. There are many sites at various stages on Butler's logistic curve, from early exploration to consolidation. Parks such as Doi Inthanon and Doi Suthep-Pui need to carefully consider their management objectives for the near future, or risk having a similar fate to some of the hilltribe villages on which many studies have focussed (for example Michaud 1994, Dearden 1991, Cohen 1979) where tourism has declined. Failure to demonstrate sustainability will lead to failure of the concept, and less chance that future innovations are adopted. Herein lies the danger of managing a first example badly.

The implications as outlined above and in the context of each chapter are applicable beyond the regional context of Northern Thailand, to the rest of the country and to other states of Southeast Asia. Further, but subject to a shift in applicability or emphasis, the concepts discussed are applicable at most locations in a global context. The issues that govern and influence the establishment and functioning of ecotourism are not, for the most part, restricted to the boundaries of any one country, but they are susceptible to the influences of the cultures, societies and policies found within those countries.

9.2 Practical implications

A number of practical issues arise from section 9.1 further to the discussions in each chapter. These are summarized in Figure 9.1. Firstly there is the need to establish and inventory the natural and cultural resources. As previously mentioned, this may be hindered by parochial perception. One of the objectives of this study was to recognize potentials for ecotourism that are previously undiscovered or understated. In my experiences in Northern Thailand, a definitive example of unrealized assets was the discovery of the Atlas Moth in Doi Inthanon National Park. While the scientists may know that the moth can be found there, the park staff did not. This moth is frequently the main attraction at butterfly farms, and is of considerable size (reputedly the largest in the world) and beauty. It impresses casual passers by who may have had no previous interest in moths. This one experience highlights the hidden diversity and beauty of Northern Thailand that is so often unrecognized, and supports the theory of parochial perception as a potential setback for the recognition of ecotourism assets (Butler, pers. comm., Miller 1995).

Throughout the course of this study I have written and commented on assets and values attributable to certain parks or natural areas. There are, however, a number of points I would like to address that will hopefully raise awareness for future avenues of ecotourism diversification.

There is a need to focus on the small. As was frequently recognized by research participants, the lack of large wildlife was sometimes a disappointment. However, in my experiences of directing visitors to sunbirds and orchids, the joy of discovery written on their faces clearly shows that it doesn't take a tiger to satisfy a person's desire to see nature. Northern Thailand has to think about the promotion of its true assets, and not promote parks for wildlife that has not been seen in many years and may no longer exist in that park at all. Further, the focus need not be on a few big parks. So few of them are promoted, and those that are receive heavy visitation. The region boasts a wealth of lesser parks with their own unique attributes, as well as a wealth of sites that do not qualify under any protected area status. I wish to highlight Huai Nam Pong village in Mae Hong Son province, an example of a place and people ready to embrace ecotourism, and which has the assets to provide attractions for ecotourists. A common and parochial thought is that there is nothing of wild interest outside of the national parks or other protected areas. This is a misconception.

I also wish to address the connectedness of people with nature. We have regrettably and incorrectly set ourselves apart from nature, and are often prone to viewing it as if it was on the television or on the other side of a fence. We are part of nature, and there are still many facets of this connectedness that we can celebrate. Often we have to look at the local people who still practice traditional techniques and can boast an intimacy with nature. Many of the hilltribes are connected in this way, notably the Karen (Elliott and Beaver 1992, Ghimire 1991). This is also something to be shared. When I examine a village like Huai Nam Pong, I not only see the fields with dancing peacocks and a saltlick with feeding parrots, but I see rice fields and traditional housing. Tourists on more than one occasion said they wanted to know how rice grows. This is such an engrained part of local life that it is probably hard for people of the region to imagine tourists wanting to partake in rice planting or fence weaving. But the demand and interest is there and it connects people to the earth in ways that they may have forgotten.

In section 4.1 I described the frustrations of a public relations officer who was critical of the concept of ecotourism, that it is not Thai, and that Thailand is "following America to the end". Rudkin and Hall (1996) add that development processes are largely western driven and authors like Cox and Elmqvist (1993) are critical of western ideals in management of protected areas. In this study I do not set out to reform Thailand's ecotourism plans or park management, only suggest through my own opinions and through those of visitors to the region as well as its residents just where changes might be made. The changes I have suggested are driven by motives for conservation and the generation of local income to provide incentives for environmental protection.

There is, aside from the region's unique natural attributes, one further avenue that currently remains ignored for the most part, and that is the strong spiritual component. Thailand is celebrated for its spiritual strength and beauty. Temples feature on tourist routes and are of exceptional beauty in many ways. During my stay in Northern Thailand I was impressed on many occasions by the synergy between man and nature in temple grounds, and the diversity and beauty of life that seemed to be afforded some protection provided it remained in the grounds of that temple. This became more apparent during the course of my stay, having visited, amongst others, ancient ruins in Doi Suthep-Pui National Park, and Tham Pla where fish shelter under the watchful eye of the Lord Buddha. The criticism of western influences in tourism development is warranted, but here Thailand has a unique opportunity to steer the basic concepts of an ecotourism strategy in a unique and distinctly Thai way. By the incorporation of Buddhist practices, philosophies and beliefs in the natural areas that people visit, a number of goals may be accomplished. First the beauty of Thai spirituality and its connections to nature will be better celebrated. Second the messages of the Lord Buddha will be better spread, such as the respect deserved by all life (this will not only be to foreign visitors unfamiliar with the philosophy, but also serve as rejuvenating reminders to the Thai people). Third, such awareness and promotion of Buddhist values may have social and environmental consequences that benefit conservation and society.

Participants in this study suggested that successful ecotourism activities, following the guiding ethics of the industry, could happen but were conditional on numerous factors. The principal groups, or stakeholders, involved are the government (including protected areas), universities, the tourism industry, non-government organizations, tourists and communities (see Figure 9.1). These stakeholders are all required to become participants in an exercise of sharing, where communication, education and cooperation are paramount for the success of future projects. This relates to the early steps in Innovation Theory, where the generation of interest results from awareness, which will allow for evaluation by the stakeholders in the ecotourism

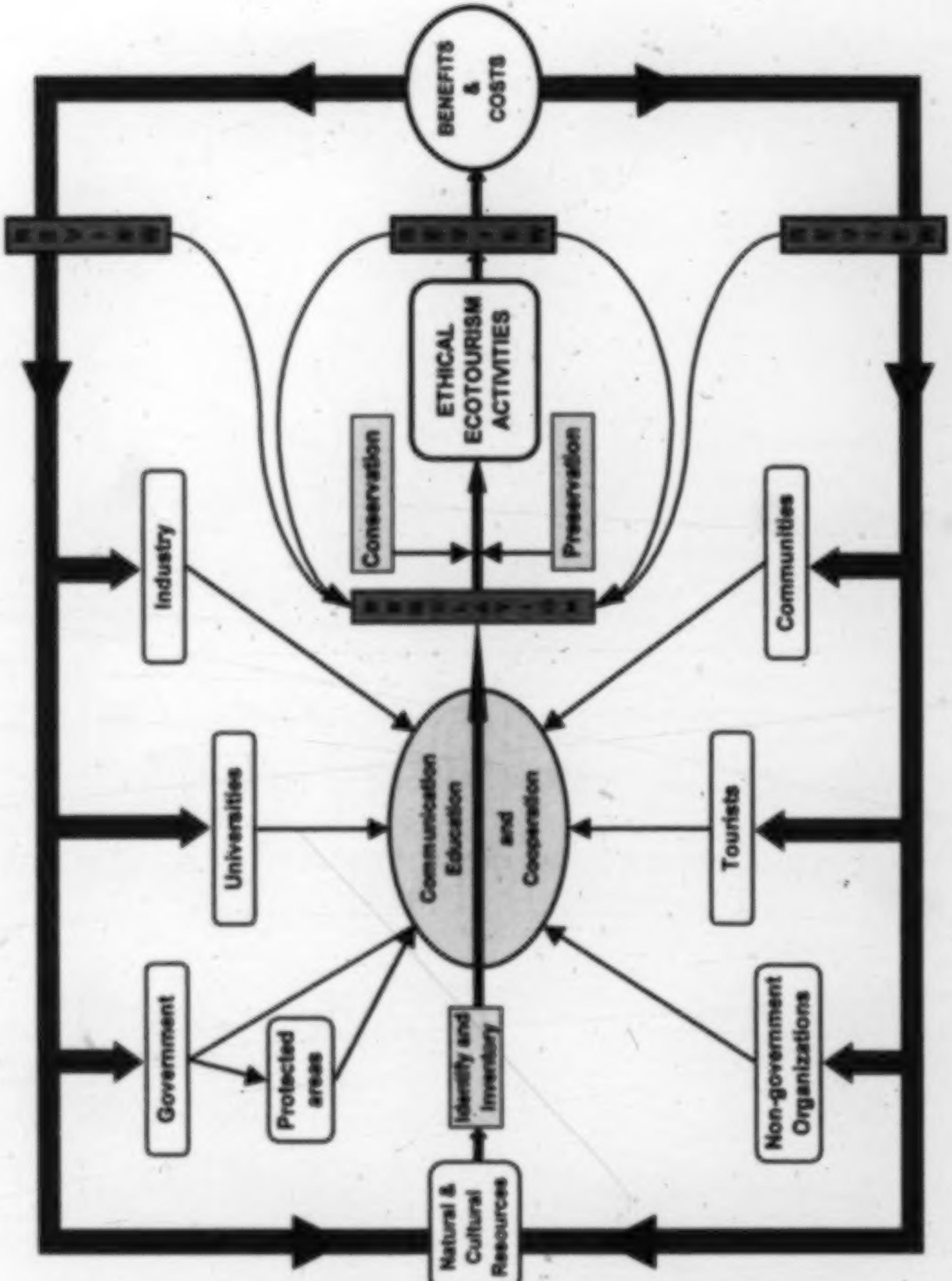
BENEFITS & COSTS
ETHICAL ECOTOURISM ACTIVITIES
Conservation
Preservation
Industry
Communities
Universities
Tourists
Communication Education and Cooperation
Government
Protected areas
Identify and Inventory
Non-government Organizations
Natural & Cultural Resources

Figure 9.1: An applied framework for the foundation of ethical ecotourism activities.

activities. In determining the speed of adoption of an innovation, Rogers and Shoemaker (1971) describe the second variable as the type of decision-making involved, either by collective or authority. The collective approach will ensure a higher level of communication, education and cooperation. From such integrated decision-making, regulations governing ecotourism activities are established by agreement and understanding, and should be based on principles of conservation and preservation as a primary goal. Beyond ensuring sustainability, these regulations serve to ensure that the outcomes of Dependency Theory here do not apply.

Once the ecotourism activities (or innovation) are established and in practice, they should be constantly reviewed, and if necessary, new regulations put in place. A review process governing management decision-making should be established in line with examples such as the Jenolan Caves in Australia (Mackay 1995). The Visitor Impact Management (VIM) system involves the identification and use of indicators to monitor key environmental and social factors. Mackay (1995) equates this management concept with the established LAC, or Limits of Acceptable Change (Stankey *et al* 1985). Both are practical approaches for areas of high visitor use, and could be applicable as review processes in Northern Thailand's natural resource areas. Both systems are dependent on establishing appropriate indicators and standards that are measurable by monitoring. In response to observed changes, management decisions can then be made. The review process of any new ecotourism innovation is essential, and should be a long-term goal of a project. Guidance should be taken from established examples of ecotourism, such as in the Galapagos Islands and in Belize, because these sites have already experienced many of the difficulties of visitor and site management (Horwich *et al* 1993, Wallace 1993).

The review process should also include the nature and effects of the benefits and costs (or liabilities and risks) of the ecotourism activities to all interested parties, as well as to the very resources (natural and cultural) that make the industry possible. Lindberg (1991) cautions that total benefits are not proportional to the number of visitors to a natural area, rather as the number of visitors rises, the total costs increase, and there is a proportional decline in total benefits per visitor. Participants in this study identified various potential costs, or risks. Durst (1994) describes the frequently identified risks (or anticipated costs) of ecotourism, and there are many examples of costs incurred through bad management (for example Horwich *et al* 1993, Wallace 1993, White and Dobias 1991).

Nielsen (1995) established that there was a high demand for an accreditation system. The TAT distributes a list of registered tour operators in the Chiang Mai region. In addition, a number of tour operators are grouping together to form clubs that might give them greater recognition. These include such initiatives as the Northern Thailand Alternative Tourism Network, a recent enterprise with only 3 companies registered in July 1997 (Duangsri pers. comm.). This was established by interested tour and trekking agencies. However, it is important to have an additional external selection force governing the election of members to accredited organizations. The TAT office in Chiang Mai could serve as a regional watchdog, ensuring that ethical industries are accredited. The TAT should only serve this role if it adheres strictly to guidelines and policies it has written (TAT 1995-1996). Guidelines written exclusively for nature tour operators do exist (for example The Ecotourism Society 1993), and should be broadly distributed. A thorough accreditation system would avoid the concerns of some authors who address operators' exploitation of the term ecotourism (for example Weiler 1993, Wight 1993).

In order to establish a model of excellence and transferability, the recommendations outlined in Figure 9.1 need to be followed, and should include the factors addressed in Figures 4.2 and 4.3. The most successful enterprise in this study was undoubtedly Tham Lod Forest Park, although this is by no means perfect. Transferability of this project is only applicable to cases where there is a small site with high visitation, and where the need for guides is high. In a broader perspective, villages like Ban Sob Haad (Doi Inthanon National Park) and Huai Nam Pong (Mae Hong Son Province) will have applications that extend beyond their own immediate community. Given the progress at Ban Sob Haad, and its situation in a national park, there is considerable potential for the enterprise to become a model for the region and beyond. One of the most significant attributes already represented by this example is that the need for ecotourism is community led, and not driven by tourist demand or by an authoritarian approach from the government and park management. A community-needs driven approach will more likely result in satisfaction and the adoption of the innovation. Ziffer (1989) emphasizes that new projects should be undertaken slowly, to avoid the "hit and run" tourism outcome described by Western (1993). Murphy (1985) stresses that a pace appropriate to local conditions be adopted. An appropriate pace will possibly result in a higher chance of innovation, since it allows for higher awareness and understanding of the introduced concepts in local communities. Ziffer (1989) cautions that a balance is needed, however, where the speed of the project is weighed against the considerations of economy of scale and the urgency of environmental protection.

The project in Ban Sob Haad aims to train local guides to become experts in their own environment, and capable of dealing with ecotourists. At Tham Lod Forest Park, the opinion was that training the guides to be bilingual and knowledgeable only results in their departure for the city for higher wages. However, other similar local guiding initiatives have been instigated and have shown promising results, for example in Costa Rica (Paaby *et al* 1991).

Finally, as cautioned by Miller (1995) and Subkeaw (pers. comm.), the flow of information regarding an innovation must be continually forthcoming from the change agents, and the supportive infrastructure remain in place to ensure the long term viability and success of an innovation. Collapse of a project may occur if that support does not exist in the long term and continue after the recent adoption of an innovation.

9.3 Review of methods

This study has presented an opportunity to use both qualitative and quantitative methods (see section 3.1). The use of quantitative alone was not considered to be adequate, because it does not examine responses in detail, and the richness of peoples' experience and perceptions is easily lost. The qualitative approach did allow for a deeper examination of responses. At times there were some disparities between the quantitative and qualitative data. For example, in Doi Inthanon National Park, a quick response survey revealed that visitors were generally satisfied with the availability of trails. However, this same issue was frequently brought up by participants in the research, who described frustrations and dissatisfaction with the availability of trails. Quantitative data, therefore, do not allow for research participants to explore their own perceptions, and qualitative data have proven to be of greater value for the purposes of this study. As Colton (1998) writes, the respondent becomes a co-researcher. In this case, they are examining, or researching, their own perspectives about issues they may not have seriously considered in the past.

Limitations with the qualitative techniques were encountered, mainly because of the need for translation of thoughts and ideas. While the interpreters offered thorough services, it is undoubtedly the case that without bilingual fluency, a degree of the richness of qualitative research is lost. Further, the questioning of visitors in English, whose first language was not English, poses similar problems. Most foreign visitors had a good command of the English language, but there were occasions where difficulties were encountered in trying to put complex ideas across.

9.4 Further research

Many authors have addressed social and environmental issues in Northern Thailand. For example Dearden *et al* (1996, 1991, 1989), Michaud (1994), Cohen (1979) have examined the social issues of tourism. In addition authors have explored the role of tourism in parks management and the potential role of nature-based tourism (Hvenegaard 1996, Dearden 1995, Dearden and Harron 1994, Brockelman and Dearden 1990). More specifically some authors have explored the issues pertinent to Doi Inthanon National Park (for example Dearden *et al* 1996, Hvenegaard 1996).

This study has added to the contributions of the above authors and responded to some their suggested areas for further research. This study has addressed some of the practical issues surrounding the development of an ecotourism industry, following the recognized need for ecotourism as addressed by the above authors. I have made recommendations in order to put into practice some of the theoretical issues addressed and examined the attitudes of visitors and others. Much of the existing research has focussed on social issues, while less has been written about the visitor's perspective. However, Hvenegaard (1996) addressed the issue of visitor opinions and behaviour. This study has expanded on his request to understand interests and demand among ecotourists, especially in Doi Inthanon National Park, and expands on some of his research questions pertaining to the management of Doi Inthanon National Park and local participation in management and decision-making.

While this study provides a clearer picture on the perceptions and potentials of ecotourism in Northern Thailand, it also raises a number of areas where further research is required to clarify and aid the development process, or further the understanding of the theoretical premises on which this study is built.

In a development context, further research on demand and supply is required. Thorough inventories of the region will aid the development of thematic ecotourism in the region, and the need to assess demand from a marketing perspective is required. While interest is demonstrated for hypothetical activities, monitoring of demand at tour agencies such as Chiang Mai Green Trekking and Tour would be beneficial. Before any ecotourism activities are established, it is wise to establish environmental sensitivities. While a monitoring and review process is essential, techniques such as LAC and VIM are designed to alter the path of negative impacts as they happen. Before such techniques are in place, it is necessary to ensure that thorough regulation is already in place (such as at practical, policy and strategic planning levels). This can only happen with a thorough understanding of local ecology, and with a review of existing ecotourism activities around the world, from which many lessons can be learned. While the study has dealt with perceived benefits and costs of ecotourism, it is important to monitor the actual benefits and costs with respect to Thailand. Here, comparisons can also be drawn or anticipated from foreign precedents. Surveys among the trekking visitors will add further clarification to the shift in tourist typologies and demand, and such knowledge may help anticipate future needs and events. The success or failure of an ecotourism innovation, such as at Ban Sob Haad, needs to be closely monitored so that lessons or examples can be drawn from a local example. Lessons especially can be drawn from the applicability of Innovation Theory to ecotourism development in Northern Thailand, since the process in Ban Sob Haad is at the trial level.

9.5 Summary

The contributions of this thesis can be summarized as follows:

- There are many conditions that need to be met in order for ecotourism to function effectively as an agent of change with respect to attitudes to the environment and conservation. These attitudes reflect on the undesirable risks associated with Dependency Theory, but mostly draw upon optimism for the ecotourism industry and its potential to oppose the theory's outcomes through the distribution of income at local levels.
- Establishment of an ecotourism project is greatly dependent on the critical components relating to Innovation Theory. Failure to consider and manage for the stages leading to adoption of an innovation will possibly result in a failure of the concept.
- The Biophilia Hypothesis draws upon people's desire to bond with nature. While Chapman (1998) highlights the significance of charismatic megafauna as a significant contributor to wildlife experiences, in the context of Northern Thailand there are many other attributes that apply. These have been extensively described and show that biophilia is a phenomenon that applies across a broad spectrum of natural attributes, and that there is considerable diversity in the ways that people wish to explore that bond with nature.
- Examples of parochialism demonstrate the need to explore the interests of the visitors, and highlight the need for external perspectives in the recognition of intrinsic values that might be applicable in the management of a regional ecotourism strategy.
- Issues in management reflect on several key areas. In the context of Innovation Theory, there is education and information, where the effective and appropriate information delivery will impact on the success of an ecotourism innovation or concept. Further issues include a sensitivity to natural areas with respect to putting a freeze on development while increasing the quality of that which is already available. Management directives should reflect and incorporate visitor and local concerns, and should primarily be built upon the values of conservation and local benefits.

- Changes in visitor demand, locally and internationally, show the potential avenue that tourism development can take with respect to ecotourism. Northern Thailand is a diverse and beautiful region, and the region could focus on the development of an ecotourism strategy. An existing provincial focus (Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai) means the benefits of tourism are not distributed to outlying areas and poorer provinces. Dispersion of visitation to these areas will distribute the benefits and counteract the negative outcomes of Dependency Theory.
- Doi Inthanon National Park has the potential to become an ecotourism role model for the region, where the involvement of local communities and the benefits they derive from ecotourism activities contribute to the management of the natural area. Further, the park can show that ecotourism is viable given an integrated approach to pursuing ecotourism within the park, despite the degradation it has suffered. Further, the success of the project at Ban Sob Haad is dependent on the implications of Innovation Theory.
- Sustainability of an ecotourism industry requires strict governance of the appropriate ethics and management. The outcomes of existing cultural tourism, notably among the hilltribes, have demonstrated routes that are not sustainable. A "boom and bust" approach to ecotourism is undesirable, and a thorough review process is required to ensure the longevity of the industry. Bad management of ecotourism will result in cultural and environmental damage, and this unsustainable reputation of the ecotourism industry will have implications in Innovation Theory, where the evaluation process will determine that the ecotourism innovation is undesirable, given those costs resulting from poor management. This will lead to a decrease in adoption of other ecotourism innovations.
- While consideration is given to the protected areas framework of Thailand, the implications for ecotourism development extend to local communities outside of protected areas, because the environmental issues are similar, and the need for alternative incomes equally desirable, as is demonstrated in the village of Huai Nam Pong.
- The local model of ecotourism in Doi Inthanon National Park, and the concepts involved in the regional development of an ecotourism strategy, have qualities of

transference to other situations in Thailand both within and external to the protected areas framework. Further, the implications are applicable in a global context, provided that societal, economic and environmental factors are all considered at the local level.

9.6 A final word

When I was in Doi Inthanon National Park I came across a short script of the Lord Buddha's teachings about the forest, that the forest is:

> *"a peculiar organism of unlimited kindness and benevolence that makes no demands for its sustenance and extends generously the products of its life activity; it affords protection to all beings, offering shade even to the axeman that destroys it."*

To close, a second script I read seemed so relevant to ecotourists, but is one that should be shared amongst all people, since without the message contained in it, we will never learn to respect the planet in the way that it deserves:

> *"know ye the grasses and the trees..... then know ye the worms, and the moths, and the different sorts of ants.... know ye also the four-footed animals small and great.... the serpents... the fish which range on the water... the birds that are borne along on wings and move through the air..."*.

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Appendix A: Open-ended Survey Instrument – English version:

Ecotourism Potentials and Opportunities in Northern Thailand:

A Perceptional Evaluation and Assessment of Ecotourism Opportunities, Presentation and Communication Strategies

We are both students from the University of Alberta in Canada. With the permission of the National Research Council of Thailand, we are conducting a study with Maejo University to determine your attitudes and perceptions on the availability of ecotourism activities. Your opinions will make an important contribution to the understanding and improvement of ecotourism opportunities in the region. With your permission we would like to ask a few questions to assess this form of tourism in Northern Thailand; this may last up to thirty minutes.

No. ____________

Date: ____________

Time: ____________

Location: ____

1: What do you think is meant by the term ecotourism?

____

____

____

____

There are many different opinions on the meaning of ecotourism. For this study, we define ecotourism as a form of tourism for experiencing wildlife and natural features - this allows tourism to play an expanding role in their protection and conservation.

2: What is your main reason for coming to this attraction?

____

____

3: How did you find out about this place?

____

____

4:	How did you get here?	motorcycle	bus
		private car	guided tour
	other	rental car	hitch-hike

5: What have you had time to see in this area?

____

____

____

6: What else will you be going to see during your trip here?

____

____

____

7: Is there any other place in Northern Thailand that you would like to see, and why?

____

____

____

8: How did you find out about this attraction that you mention?

____

____

____

9: What has been your main source of information for this region?

____

10: How well were the natural features presented in the various information sources that you have used?

1 - Very well
2 - Well
3 - No opinion
4 - Poor
5 - Very poor

11: During your travels in Northern Thailand, how important are each of these attractions to you?

1 - Very important
2 - Important
3 - No opinion
4 - Unimportant
5 - Very unimportant

Natural beauty	1	2	3	4	5
Geological sites	1	2	3	4	5
Wild flowers	1	2	3	4	5
Birds	1	2	3	4	5
Other wild animals	1	2	3	4	5
Wildlife viewing in general	1	2	3	4	5
Cultural or sacred sites	1	2	3	4	5

12: What are your comments on the facilities and access for seeing any of the above?

____

____

____

13: How important are the following cultural or sacred sites to you?

1 - Very important
2 - Important
3 - No opinion
4 - Unimportant
5 - Very unimportant

Hill tribes	1	2	3	4	5
Temples	1	2	3	4	5
Cuisine	1	2	3	4	5
Festivals	1	2	3	4	5
Arts and Drama	1	2	3	4	5
Meeting local people	1	2	3	4	5
Shopping	1	2	3	4	5
Archaeological sites	1	2	3	4	5
Other (please describe)	1	2	3	4	5

14: Can you describe the most favourite natural experience you have had here in Northern Thailand? Why was this your most favourite experience?

____

____

____

15: Which natural features do you think are not well advertized in this area?

____

____

____

16: Have you been here before? __________
If Yes, how many times? __________

17: Do you think you will come here again? Why?

____

____

18: Of all the attractions you have been to here in Northern Thailand, what would you have liked to know more about?

____

19: Do you think that prior knowledge of these attractions would improve your experience here? (Y/N) How?

20: If you could come here again, which time of the year would you prefer to come, and why?

21: What did you most enjoy about this attraction?

22: Do you have any criticisms or dislikes about this attraction?

23: Can you suggest ways in which this attraction might be managed differently?

24: How much ecotourism potential do you think Northern Thailand has for the future? Why?

1 Very high
2 High
3 No opinion
4 Low
5 Very low

25: How would you rate the ecotourism activities available to you today? Why?

1 Very good
2 Good
3 No opinion
4 Poor
5 Very Poor

26: Do you think ecotourism will truly benefit Northern Thailand? ± How?

27: Is gaining knowledge important to you during your visit? Why?

28: During your visit, did you use the following? If yes, were they useful?

1 - Very useful
2 - Useful
3 - No opinion
4 - Not useful
5 - Not at all useful

	Booklets	1	2	3	4	5
	Interpretive Signs	1	2	3	4	5
	Hired Guides	1	2	3	4	5
	Scheduled Tours	1	2	3	4	5
	Visitor Centres	1	2	3	4	5
	Slide shows	1	2	3	4	5

	Checklists	1	2	3	4	5
	Trails	1	2	3	4	5
	Rangers/Interpreters	1	2	3	4	5
	Other (please describe)	1	2	3	4	5

29: How do you feel that these contributed to your visit?

30: What was the most significant thing you learned about Nature here?

31: How would you improve the information presented to you?

32: How well do you understand this place?

1 Very well
2 Well
3 No Opinion
4 A little
5 Not at all

To finish up, we would just like to ask you a few questions about yourself.

33: Male/Female

34: What is your nationality? ________________________

35: In which town and country do you live? ______________________________

36: What is your occupation? ______________________________________

37: What is your highest level of education? ___________________________

38: In which year were you born? ___________________________

39: Ecotourist/Tourist (delete as appropriate)

Appendix B: Open-ended survey instrument – Thai version:

แบบสอบถาม

เราทั้งสองเป็นนักศึกษามาจากมหาวิทยาลัย Alberta ใน Canada โดยได้รับการอนุมัติ จากสภาวิจัยแห่งชาติ ของประเทศไทย โดยร่วมวิจัยกับมหาวิทยาลัยแม่โจ้ เพื่อที่จะวัดเจตคติ และทรรศนะของกิจกรรมการท่องเที่ยวเชิงอนุรักษ์ที่มีอยู่ในความคิดเห็นของท่าน เป็นสิ่งสำคัญที่จะทำให้เกิดความเข้าใจ และปรับปรุงโอกาสการท่องเที่ยวเชิงอนุรักษ์ในภูมิภาค และท้องถิ่น จึงขออนุญาตถามคำถาม เล็ก ๆ น้อย ๆ เกี่ยวกับรูปแบบของการท่องเที่ยวในภาคเหนือของไทย ซึ่งคิดว่าเวลาไม่เกิน 30 นาที

เลขที่ ______

วัน ______

เวลา ______

สถานที่ ______

1. คุณคิดว่าความหมายของการท่องเที่ยวเชิงอนุรักษ์คืออะไร?

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______

2. อะไรเป็นเหตุผลหลักที่ทำให้คุณมาเที่ยวที่นี่?

______

3. คุณรู้จักที่นี่ได้อย่างไร?

______

4. คุณเดินทางมาที่นี่ได้อย่างไร ?

______

5. คุณได้พบอะไรบ้างที่นี่ และภาคเหนือ ?

______

6. นอกจากสิ่งที่ได้พบเห็นในข้อ 5 แล้ว คุณอยากจะพบเห็นอะไรอีก ?
หลังจากนี้จะไปที่ไหนต่อหรือไม่

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______

7. มีสถานที่อื่นอีกไหม ในภาคเหนือของไทยที่คุณอยากจะไปเที่ยว เพราะเหตุใด ?

______

______

8. คุณรู้จักสถานที่ ในข้อ 7 ได้อย่างไร ?

______

9. ในการมาเที่ยวภาคเหนือและที่นี่ ครั้งนี้คุณได้ข้อมูลจากที่ไหน หรือ ใช้อะไรเป็นข้อมูล ?

______

______

10. ข้อมูลที่คุณได้จากข้อ 9 มีประโยชน์กับคุณมากน้อยแค่ไหน ?

1. ดีมาก
2. ดี
3. ไม่มีความคิดเห็น
4. น้อย
5. น้อยมาก

11. สิ่งต่อไปนี้สามารถดึงดูดให้คุณเกิดความสนใจท่องเที่ยวได้มากน้อยแค่ไหน ?

ระดับ : 1. = สำคัญมาก ๆ
2. = สำคัญ
3. = ไม่มีความคิดเห็น
4. = ไม่สำคัญนัก
5. = ไม่สำคัญอย่างยิ่ง

เกี่ยวกับเรื่อง	- ความสวยงามทางธรรมชาติ	1	2	3	4	5
	- สภาพทางภูมิศาสตร์	1	2	3	4	5
	- ดอกไม้ป่า	1	2	3	4	5
	- นกต่าง ๆ	1	2	3	4	5
	- สัตว์ป่าอื่น ๆ	1	2	3	4	5
	- การชมสัตว์ป่า ทั่วไป ๆ	1	2	3	4	5
	- วัฒนธรรมและความศักดิ์สิทธิ์ทั้งหลาย	1	2	3	4	5

12. คุณคิดว่าสิ่งอำนวยความสะดวกและการเข้าถึงสถานที่ต่าง ๆ ในภาคเหนือและที่นี่เป็นอย่างไร ?

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13. สิ่งต่าง ๆ ทางด้านวัฒนธรรมเหล่านี้ มีส่วนทำให้คุณเกิดความสนใจเดินทางท่องเที่ยวมากน้อยแค่ไหน ?

ระดับ : 1. = สำคัญมาก ๆ
2. = สำคัญ
3. = ไม่มีความคิดเห็น
4. = ไม่สำคัญนัก
5. = ไม่สำคัญอย่างยิ่ง

เกี่ยวกับเรื่อง	- ชาวเขา	1	2	3	4	5
	- วัด	1	2	3	4	5
	- อาหาร	1	2	3	4	5
	- งานประเพณี	1	2	3	4	5
	- ศิลปะการแสดง	1	2	3	4	5

- พบปะผู้คนในท้องถิ่น	1	2	3	4	5
- การซื้อของ	1	2	3	4	5
- แหล่งโบราณคดี	1	2	3	4	5
- อื่น ๆ โปรดระบุ …………	1	2	3	4	5

14. ประสบการณ์การท่องเที่ยวในภาคเหนือครั้งใดที่ คุณประทับใจมากที่สุด เพราะเหตุใร ?

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

15. คุณคิดว่าควรจะมีการประชาสัมพันธ์ในส่วนไหนของ ภาคเหนือของไทยและที่นี่ ให้มากกว่านี้ ?

……………………………………………………………………………………

16. ท่านเคยมาที่นี่ไหม ? ถ้าเคย มากี่ครั้งแล้ว

……………………………………………………………………………………

17. คุณคิดว่าจะมาที่นี้อีกไหม ? เพราะเหตุใร ?

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

18. ในที่ ที่คุณเคยไปมาแล้วในภาคเหนือ คุณต้องการทราบข้อมูลอะไรเพิ่มเติมอีกบ้าง ? เพราะเหตุใร ?

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

19. ถ้าคุณได้รับข้อมูลของที่นี่มาก่อน จะทำให้ประสบความสำเร็จในการท่องเที่ยวหรือไม่ ?
เพราะเหตุใร ?

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

20. ถ้าคุณได้มาที่นี่อีกครั้ง ท่านจะเลือกมาในช่วงระยะเวลาไหนของปี เพราะเหตุใร ?

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

21. คุณชอบ ในส่วนไหนในสถานที่นี้ที่สุด ?

……………………………………………………………………………………

22. คุณ ไม่ชอบ ส่วนไหนในสถานที่นี้ที่สุด ?

……………………………………………………………………………………

23. ถ้าคุณได้เป็นผู้บริหารที่นี่ คุณคิดว่าน่าจะปรับปรุงในส่วนใดบ้าง ?

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

24. คุณคิดว่าแนวโน้มที่การท่องเที่ยวเชิงอนุรักษ์ในภาคเหนือของไทยในอนาคต เป็นอย่างไร ?

1. สูงมาก
2. สูง
3. ไม่มีความคิดเห็น
4. น้อย
5. น้อยมาก

ทำไมจึงคิดเช่นนั้น ?

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____

25. คุณคิดว่าสภาวะการท่องเที่ยวเชิงอนุรักษ์ ของไทยในปัจจุบันเป็นอย่างไร ? เพราะเหตุไร ?

1 . ดีมาก
2 . ดี
3 . ไม่มีความคิดเห็น
4 . น้อย
5 . น้อยมาก

____

____

26. คุณคิดว่าการท่องเที่ยวเชิงอนุรักษ์จะมีประโยชน์ สำหรับภาคเหนือของไทยหรือไม่ ? อย่างไร ?

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____

27. การเรียนรู้ระหว่างการท่องเที่ยวมีความสำคัญต่อคุณหรือไม่ ? อย่างไร ?

____

28. ในการมาที่นี่คุณใช้ประโยชน์จากสิ่งเหล่านี้หรือไม่ ?

หนังสือแนะนำ	1	2	3	4	5
ป้ายบรรยายธรรมชาติต่าง ๆ	1	2	3	4	5
ไกด์ที่จ้างมา	1	2	3	4	5
ตารางเวลาท่องเที่ยว	1	2	3	4	5
ศูนย์บริการนักท่องเที่ยว	1	2	3	4	5
การนำเสนอจุดเด่นทางธรรมชาติ	1	2	3	4	5
สมุดรายชื่อ	1	2	3	4	5
เส้นทางเดินในอุทยาน	1	2	3	4	5
เจ้าหน้าที่อุทยานฯ	1	2	3	4	5
อื่น ๆ (โปรดอธิบาย)____________	1	2	3	4	5

29. คุณคิดว่าสิ่งเหล่านี้ (ในข้อ 28) ให้ประโยชน์แก่ท่านหรือไม่ / อย่างไร ?

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____

30. อะไรเป็นสิ่งที่คุณสนใจมากที่สุด สำหรับที่นี่ และได้เรียนรู้อะไรจากสิ่งนั้นบ้าง ?

....

....

31. คุณคิดว่าอุทยานแห่งชาตินี้ จะสามารถปรับปรุงการนำเสนอข้อมูลข่าวสารสำหรับนักท่องเที่ยวได้อย่างไร ? (สามารถเสนอแนะการปรับปรุงตามรายการในข้อ 28)

....

....

ก่อนจะจบเราขอถามคำถามเกี่ยวกับตัวท่านอีกสักเล็กน้อย

32. หลังจากที่ได้ท่องเที่ยวที่นี่แล้ว คุณเข้าใจสภาพต่าง ๆ ของที่นี่แค่ไหน ?

1. ดีมาก
2. ดี
3. ไม่มีความคิดเห็น
4. น้อย
5. น้อยมาก

33. ชาย/หญิง ? ....

34. คุณเป็นคนสัญชาติอะไร ? ....

35. คุณอยู่ในเมือง หรือ จังหวัด..ประเทศ..

36. คุณมีอาชีพอะไร ? ....

37. คุณจบการศึกษาระดับใด ? ....

38. คุณเกิดในปีอะไร ? ....

Appendix C: List of trekking agencies visited in Chiang Mai and details of treks offered. Dark cells indicate that the feature was offered.

No.	Name and address	Protected areas	Wildlife	Hilltribes	Waterfalls	Rafting	Orchid - butterfly	Elephant riding	Spring	Cave	Length (days)	Price (Baht)	Notes
1	Pop's Tour - Kotchasarn Road			■							3		Round Mae Ai region, new company, not very informative
2	Journey Co. Ltd - 53/1 Kotchasarn Road					■	■	■			1		Trek location just south of Chiang Mai
3	O.P. Travel - 422 Thapae Road				■	■		■			1	800	Chomthong area, through jungle
		[illegible]		■	■		■	■			3		
4	Singha Travel Ltd - 277 Thapae Road		■	■							4	neg.	North of Mae Hong Son, considered the best because of more forest; last trek 2 years ago for photographer
		DINP	■								2	neg.	birds in DINP, with good bird guide
5	Supachai Tours - 378-380 Thapae Road			■	■	■	■	■			3		did elephant treks before and elephants destroyed forest so got in trouble with police - trying again; doesn't know wildlife in the area yet, but may do wildlife tours later - just started in this part
6	Fortune North Star Travel - 255 Thapae Road	DINP		■	■	■		■			3	1,300	only operator in this area....best jungle is here
7	Panda Tour and Trekking - 179 Thapae Road			■	■	■	■	■			1		confessed afterwards that "you just don't see any wildlife except by accident"
		DINP		■	■	■		■			3		
	return visit			■	■	■		■			3 or 4	1,500 or 1,700	see monkeys snakes, Pai and Mae Taeng area is good, go further afield than other tours

Appendix C cont. List of trekking agencies visited in Chiang Mai and details of treks offered. Dark cells indicate that the feature was offered.

8	Travel Window Co. - 270 272 Thapae Road	■ DINP		■	■	■		■			3		summit and waterfall in DINP
9	Enjoy Tour - 258 Thapae Road			■	■	■				■	3	1,M2 0350	optional activities, in region of Mae Hong Son and Pai - best for nature
10	Chiang Mai Tribal Tours - Thapae Road			■		■		■					
11	K. King Travel - 172 Thapae Road			■	■	■		■	■				Mae Taeng area, offered this but not the listed DINP with "wild orchids"
12	Arinda Travel Agency - Thapae Road												don't have it, no birds here except in winter, no one does this
13	Topaz Travel - 14 Changklan Road	■ DINP		■	■	■		■			3	1,500	Chomthong and region
14	Siam Express Tour - 26 Thapae Road			■	■	■	■	■			1	800	Mae Rim Safari tour
15	MT Paradise Travel - 34 Thapae Road			■		■		■			5		Tak province, around Mae Sot. Dec and Jan best lots of birds and forests, fewer tourists, only the guide can give me good info on this
16	Urosia Holidays Co - 36-38 Thapae Road			■	■	■	■	■			3		Mae Taeng area
17	Pioneer Tours - Loi Kroh Road				■	■	■	■			1	800	
18	UPT Travel - Kampaengdin Road			■	■	■		■			4		Mae Taeng area.
19	PSN Travel Service - Loi Kroh Road	■ DINP		■	■			■			4	1,650	non-tourist area, can see small birds and mammals, guides know some
20	Queen Bee Travel Service - 5 Moonmuang Road			■	■	■	■	■	■		3	1,200	of course the guides are good at some birds and spotting them
21	SV Service Tour - 29/5 Moonmuang Road	■ DINP		■	■			■			3	1,500	highest mountain
22	Mary Jane Tour - Moonmuang Road	■ DINP		■	■	■		■			4	1,550	non-tourist area, temple and high point focus

Appendix C cont. List of trekking agencies visited in Chiang Mai and details of treks offered. Dark cells indicate that that feature was offered.

23	PM Travel and Service - Moonmuang Road												not many animals and birds
24	Travel Point - Moonmuang Road												guides don't do this
25	SP Tours - 99/1 Moonmuang Road			■		■	■	■			3	1,300	this one has good jungle - Mae Taeng and Pai region, guarantee only people in villages, see butterflies and buffalo beside the river
26	Viking Tours - Ratwithi Road												don't do it - animals have gone, moved into the deeper forest, can't be seen at night because paths used so much
27	Trekking Collective - 22 Ratchadamneon Road		■								4	4,000	walking, day and night time observation, good for wild elephants, bears, tigers, very isolated, price for group of six; elephants better and more common in rainy season (but suffer harder access)
28	Wanna Tours - 51 Loi Kroh Road			■		■		■	■		3	1,300	Mae Taeng area
29	Chiang Mai Green Trekking and Tour - Chiang Mai-Lamphun Road	■	■	■	■						3		nature trails, Karen hilltribe, birdwatching on jeep trail, birding centre, camping at HQ; Royal Project. Also thinking about Montjong WS for animal watching.
30	Victoria Tour and Travel - 32 Charoenprathed Rd			■	■	■		■			3	1,200	Mae Taeng area
31	Golden Tour North - 17/3 Charoenprathed Rd			■	■	■	■	■	■		3	3,300	Mae Kok sightsee to Golden Triangle
32	Vanida Tour - 3/1 Charoenprathed Rd			■	■	■		■	■		3	1,500	Mae Kok sightsee to Golden Triangle
33	Mau Tour Service - 62/1 Charoenprathed Rd			■	■	■		■	■		5	3,200	best area for nature is Pai

Appendix C cont. List of trekking agencies visited in Chiang Mai and details of treks offered. Dark cells indicate that the feature was offered.

34	Chiang Mai Souvenir GH - 118 Charoenprathed RD			■	■	■		■			3	1,400	Mae Chem behind DINP, south is better for nature
35	Skybird Group - 92/3 Sridonchai Rd			■		■	■	■			1	1,500	
				■			■	■	■		3	2,900	southside Mae Taeng
36	Siam IT Tours Co - 92/17 Sridonchai Rd			■	■	■ [illegible]		■			3	2,200	Mae Kok and northside
37	Chiang Mai Discovery T - 201/5 Sridonchai Rd			■	■	■ [illegible]		■			3	3,500	Mae Kok - Thaton, plus sightsee at Golden Triangle and Chiang Saen
38	Green Earth Tours & Travel - 88/8 Sridonchai Rd			■		■		■			3	5,500	lots of hiking Mae Hong Son province, offered this one, had to ask for one eco-trek that was signed on the door
		DINP		■	■	■		■			2	1,800	new one "jungle trekking", visit Royal project, remote less touristic and beautiful jungle
39	AOD Car rent and travel - 154/2 Changklan Rd			■	■	■		■	■		3	1,400	Mae Taeng area
40	Unique Travel Service - 28 rajwithee Rd			■	■	■ [illegible]		■	■	■	3	1,600	Mae Kok, also sightsee to border
41	Jame and Jack Trekking and Tour	CDNP		■	■	■		■			3	1,500	Mae Taeng, offers jungle camp for one night
	Filled cells indicate that the component is on offer for the tour												
	DINP= Doi Inthanon National Park, CDNP= Chiang Dao National Park												

Appendix D: Bilingual (Thai-English) quick response survey administered in Doi Inthanon National Park by the Angkha Nature Trail:

การสำรวจทางเดินศึกษาธรรมชาติ TRAIL SURVEY

ขอขอบคุณที่ท่านได้เสียสละเวลาในการตอบแบบสอบถาม. ผมเป็นนักวิจัยจากประเทศแคนาดา ศึกษาเกี่ยวกับเรื่องแนวโน้มของการท่องเที่ยวเชิงอนุรักษ์ในอุทยานแห่งชาติดอยอินทนนท์. ประสบการณ์ของท่านมีความสำคัญมากต่อผม และอาจจะช่วยในการวางแผนการท่องเที่ยวในอนาคตของอุทยานแห่งชาติดอยอินทนนท์ ต่อไป.

Thank you for taking the time to do this questionnaire. I am a researcher from Canada studying ecotourism opportunities available in Doi Inthanon National Park. Your opinions are very important to me, and may help plan for the future in Doi Inthanon.

โปรดใช้คำตอบข้างล่างนี้ ในการตอบคำถาม ข้อ 2 , 4 และ 6
Please use the following guide to help you answer questions 2, 4 and 6:

① - พอใจมาก very satisfied
② - พอใจ satisfied
③ - ไม่มีความเห็น no opinion
④ - ไม่พอใจ unsatisfied
⑤ - ไม่พอใจมาก very unsatisfied

1: ท่านได้เดินศึกษาธรรมชาติในเส้นทางใด ? Which trails have you used?

☐ อ่างกา Angkha
☐ กิ่วแม่ปาน Gew Mae Pan
☐ อื่น ๆ กรุณาระบุ Other: please describe:
ชื่อทางเดิน name:..
จุดเริ่มต้นเส้นทาง start point:..
จุดสิ้นสุดเส้นทาง finish point:..

2: ท่านพอใจกับทางเดินศึกษาธรรมชาตินั้นแค่ไหน ? How satisfied were you with the trail?

ทางเดินศึกษาธรรมชาติอ่าวกา	Angkha trail:	①	②	③	④	⑤
ทางเดินศึกษาธรรมชาติกิ่งแม่ปาน	Gew Mae Pan trail:	①	②	③	④	⑤
อื่น ๆ กรุณาระบุ	Other:......................	①	②	③	④	⑤
	....	①	②	③	④	⑤

3: ท่านใช้อะไรเป็นข้อมูลในการเดินศึกษาธรรมชาติ ?
What was your main source of information while on the trail?

☐ ป้าย signs
☐ แผ่นพับ brochure
☐ ไม่ได้ใช้อะไร none
☐ มัคคุเทศก์ท้องถิ่น local guide
☐ เจ้าหน้าที่อุทยานฯ park ranger
☐ อื่น ๆ กรุณาระบุ other - please describe:
....

4: ท่านพอใจกับข้อมูลที่ได้รับเกี่ยวกับทางเดินธรรมชาติแค่ไหน ?
How satisfied were you with the information about the trail?

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

5: ถ้าท่านมีโอกาสเดินศึกษาธรรมชาติในเส้นทางเดิมอีกครั้ง ท่านต้องการให้มีการเปลี่ยนแปลงในส่วนใดบ้าง เพื่อสร้างประสบการณ์ที่ดีกว่าของท่าน ?
If you were to use the same trail again, what changes would you like to make to improve your experience?

6: ท่านมีความพอใจในจำนวนเส้นทางเดินศึกษาธรรมชาติของอุทยานฯ หรือไม่ ?
Are you satisfied with the number of trails available to you in the park?

① ② ③ ④ ⑤

7: ท่านชอบทางเดินศึกษาธรรมชาติประเภทใด ? Which kind of trail do you prefer?

☐ เดินด้วยตนเอง self-guided
☐ ชาวบ้านท้องถิ่นเป็นมัคคุเทศก์ guided by local villager
☐ เจ้าหน้าที่อุทยานฯ นำไป guided by park ranger

8: ท่านอยากให้ทางเดินศึกษาธรรมชาติมีระยะทางประมาณเท่าใด ?
What is your preferred length of trail (assuming they are all of the same difficulty)?

☐ 1 กม./km ☐ 3 km ☐ 5 km ☐ 7 km ☐ 10 km ☐ 15+ km กม.ขึ้นไป

9: ท่านมีความสนใจเส้นทางเดินศึกษาธรรมชาติที่ใช้เวลามากกว่า 1 วัน หรือไม่ ?
How interested are you in nature treks that last more than one day?

① สนใจมาก very interested
② สนใจ interested
③ ไม่มีความคิดเห็น no opinion
④ ไม่สนใจ uninterested
⑤ ไม่สนใจอย่างยิ่ง very uninterested

10: ถ้าท่านเดินในเส้นทางศึกษาธรรมชาติที่ต้องใช้เวลามากกว่า 1 วัน ท่านต้องการที่พักแบบใด ?
If you did a nature trek that lasts more than one day, where would you like to stay?

☐ - เต้นท์ camping ☐ - พักกับชาวเขา hill-tribes ☐ - ที่พักของอุทยานฯ park accommodation

11: จากหัวข้อข้างล่างนี้ ท่านสนใจอะไรบ้าง (กรุณาเลือกที่สนใจที่สุด 3 อย่าง) ?
Which 3 of the following are of interest to you?

☐ สัตว์เลี้ยงลูกด้วยนมขนาดใหญ่ large mammals
☐ สัตว์เลี้ยงลูกด้วยนมขนาดเล็ก small mammals
☐ นก birds
☐ ผีเสื้อ butterflies and moths
☐ แมลงต่าง ๆ other insects
☐ กล้วยไม้ orchids
☐ ดอกไม้อื่น ๆ other flowers
☐ เห็ด และ พืชชั้นต่ำ fungi
☐ ป่า forests
☐ น้ำตก waterfalls
☐ ถ้ำ caves
☐ จุดชมวิว viewpoints
☐ สัตว์เลื้อยคลาน reptiles (e.g. snakes)
☐ สัตว์ครึ่งบกครึ่งน้ำ amphibians (e.g. frogs)
☐ ชาวเขา hilltribes
☐ สภาพอากาศ weather
☐ อื่น ๆ กรุณาระบุ other - please describe...

12: ท่านมีสัญชาติอะไร ? What is your nationality?

☐ ไทย Thai ☐ Foreign - please state which ....

ถ้าท่านมีข้อแนะนำอื่นเกี่ยวกับการท่องเที่ยวเชิงอนุรักษ์ และอุทยานแห่งชาติดอยอินทนนท์ กรุณาเขียนลงในที่ว่างด้านล่างนี้ ขอบคุณมากครับ.

If you have any other comments about ecotourism and Doi Inthanon National Park, please write them in the space below.
Thank you - Ian Sheldon